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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE DYNAMICS  
OF CHRISTIAN CONVERSION AND ITS  
APPLICATION TO NISEI IN HAWAII

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The School of Theology at Claremont

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Religion

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by  
Richard Tadao Matsushita  
June 1967

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FROM AUTHOR

Richard Tadao Matsushita  
under the direction of his Faculty Committee,  
and approved by its members, has been presented  
to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of  
Theology at Claremont in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

### *Faculty Committee*

John B. Cobb Jr.  
Eric L. Titus  
Frank N. Kemper

Date June 1967

F. Thomas Trotter

Dear

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
	A Statement of Personal Interest. . . . .	1
	The Purpose of this Study . . . . .	2
	Structure . . . . .	2
	Limitations of this Study . . . . .	4
	Definition of Terms . . . . .	5
	What is religious experience. . . . .	5
	What is conversion. . . . .	5
II.	EIGHTEENTH, NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURY	
	REPRESENTATIVES OF CONVERSION . . . . .	13
	Francis Asbury as a Representative of the	
	Eighteenth Century. . . . .	15
	Horace Bushnell as a Representative of the	
	Nineteenth Century. . . . .	26
	Paul Tillich as a Representative of the	
	Twentieth Century . . . . .	37
III.	TWO BASIC TYPES OF CONVERSION . . . . .	50
	Sudden Conversion . . . . .	50
	Gradual Conversion. . . . .	63
IV.	VIEWS OF SIN AND CONVERSION . . . . .	74
	Schleiermacher. . . . .	74
	A view of sin . . . . .	74
	A view of grace . . . . .	80

	iii
CHAPTER	PAGE
Kierkegaard . . . . .	90
A view of sin . . . . .	90
A view of salvation . . . . .	97
An Attempt at Synthesis . . . . .	100
Points of similarity . . . . .	101
Points of difference . . . . .	102
Possible approaches to sin and conversion .	103
V. PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF THIS STUDY. . . . .	106
Ministering to the Nisei in Hawaii. . . . .	106
A historical development . . . . .	106
Some psychological problems . . . . .	109
Some religious problems . . . . .	111
An approach to the Nisei's problem. . . . .	114
Conclusion . . . . .	117
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	124

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A Statement of Personal Interest

In the history of the development of Christianity in Hawaii, conversion has played an important function. Through the work of the first Christian missionaries in 1820 the Hawaiian people were converted from a pagan culture to the Christian culture. Within a relatively short span of time Hawaii was totally converted to a Christian culture. It was into such a culture that the first immigrants from Japan found themselves. The Japanese people brought with them their Buddhist religion and continued its practice. They wanted their children (Nisei) also to be brought up as Buddhists. The Nisei, however, soon found themselves torn between two cultures, that of their Buddhist parents and that of the American Christian culture. The Nisei saw in Christianity a belief quite different from the Buddhist beliefs they were taught. Many of them came to feel that Buddhism no longer met their personal needs but out of a sense of loyalty to their Issei parents they continued to observe certain practices even though they were no longer meaningful for them.

This writer as a Nisei who has been converted to the Christian faith feels a strong desire to minister to the

Nisei. Thus, he feels it important to understand the dynamics of conversion in order to minister effectively to the Nisei. By understanding the dynamics of conversion he believes he can help them be converted to Christianity as a relevant and meaningful way of life.

### The Purpose of this Study

This study will investigate and describe the dynamics of Christian conversion in terms of its theological and psychological components in an attempt (1) to isolate some of the essential factors which cause the process to take place, (2) to clear away stereotyped ideas, and (3) to determine how one can minister effectively in leading a person to such an experience. The study will serve as a guide-line for this writer's own evangelistic ministry.

### Structure

Chapter One will be a survey and analysis of the thoughts of some major theologians and leaders in the field of the psychologists of religion. At the turn of the century psychologists began to take an interest in the study of the dynamics of conversion. Some of the most classic studies were done by Edwin Starbuck<sup>1</sup> and William James.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Edwin Starbuck, The Psychology of Religion (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900).

<sup>2</sup>William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience (New York: Modern Library, 1929).

In Chapters Two and Three types of conversion will be discussed. In Chapter Two the views of Francis Asbury, Horace Bushnell and Paul Tillich will be presented as representative views of conversion from the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries respectively. The reason for using Asbury, Bushnell and Tillich as representative thinkers is to show how the concept of conversion has changed in each of these centuries.

The reason for using only American thinkers is because it will better suit the purpose of this paper. There has been a great emphasis on conversion in Hawaii but there is a lack of primary sources on this phenomenon. However, the missionary work in Hawaii is a direct reflection of the attitude of the American Christian Church about conversion. Thus, a study of conversion in America will help to shed light on the conversion of the people of Hawaii.

Chapter Three will discuss sudden and gradual conversion. This chapter will present the variations between sudden and gradual conversion and see what the dynamic elements are in causing conversion. This chapter will also attempt to find if there are elements that are common to both types of conversion.

The Fourth Chapter will discuss the necessary elements for conversion found in Chapter Three. For this

discussion the thought of Friedrich Schleiermacher and Søren Kierkegaard will be used as two theologians who have seriously dealt with the problem of conversion.

The concluding chapter will attempt to apply the findings of this study to the ministry to the Nisei in Hawaii. Some of the problems confronting the Nisei will be discussed with suggestions of how this writer may help the Nisei find solutions of their problems through Christian conversion.

#### Limitations of this Study

Because of the complexity and breadth of the problems connected with conversion, it is necessary to select particular aspects for treatment. This dissertation concentrates only on the dynamic aspect of the phenomenon. Secondly, due to the voluminous amount of material written on this subject only selected writings will be covered. The studies of Starbuck and James will serve as guidelines. Thirdly, only material written in English will be used because of the inadequacy of this writer in foreign languages. Finally, this dissertation is written with a specific group of people in mind; thus, it will tend not to be an inclusive study of conversion in Christendom as a whole. The major emphasis will be placed on the Protestant discussion of conversion. This does not mean that



conversion does not take place in Catholicism. It only means that more emphasis has been placed on this experience in Protestant Christianity.

### Definition of terms

Before a definition is given, certain presuppositions of this writer need to be presented. It is his understanding that God is always in the process of revealing himself to man. The purpose of God's revelation is to establish an ever deepening relationship with man. Conversion is the process of this relationship.

What is religious experience? The fact that religious experience occurs is not in question. How it is defined, however, is much in discussion. Within this paper, we will call it the awareness or consciousness of God's activity in one's life.

What is conversion? There are many different types of religious experience--conversion is one of them. Some ways it has been defined are the following. At the turn of the century, Edwin Starbuck wrote that conversion was ". . . characterized by more or less sudden changes of character from evil to goodness, from sinfulness to righteousness, and from indifference to spiritual insight and activity."<sup>3</sup> It was a growth event encompassing a whole

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<sup>3</sup>Starbuck, op. cit., p. 21.

process of events which preceded, accompanied, and immediately followed the sudden change in the character of a person.<sup>4</sup>

One became sympathetic to the events of the world with an active striving to be in harmony with them. In other words one became existentially involved in the world.<sup>5</sup> For Starbuck, this attainment of peace came about through rational insights into the problems involved.<sup>6</sup>

A few years later in 1902, William James published his book, The Varieties of Religious Experience. His definition was similar to Starbuck's. Conversion was

that process gradual or sudden by which a self hitherto divided and consciously wrong and inferior and unhappy becomes unified and consciously right and superior and happy in consequence of its firm hold on religious realities.<sup>7</sup>

James saw the experience on a more personal level--involving one's ". . . intimate needs, ideals, desolations, consolations, failures and successes."<sup>8</sup> These personal elements are held in tension with religious ideas. The effects of this tension bring the religious ideas that were previously only peripheral into the conscious center of one's life.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>7</sup>James, op. cit., p. 186.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 193.

James used two terms that have been helpful in distinguishing the various types of conversion--"volitional" and "self-surrender". Volitional conversion meant the experience in which one arrived at religious convictions with a minimum of struggle and conflict. It is the process of a gradual build up of a new set of moral and spiritual habits.<sup>10</sup> Conversion of the self-surrender type is much more sudden and dramatic. It is the result of a crisis. There is the awareness of one's "present incompleteness or wrongness, the 'sin' which he is eager to escape from; and . . . the positive ideal which he longs to compass."<sup>11</sup> The "struggling away from sin" with a dependence "on the larger Power . . . makes for righteousness."<sup>12</sup> One completely reverses his tracks--re-directing his life and energy.

A third viewpoint to consider is that of George A. Coe. He gives the following elements as the marks of conversion.

(1) The subject's very self seems to be profoundly changed. (2) This change seems not to be wrought by the subject but upon him; the control seems not to be self-control, the outcome not a result of mere growth. (3) The sphere of the change is the attitudes that constitute one's character or mode of life. But one's whole world may acquire new meaning; or there may be a sense of divine presence; or there may seem to come new insights into a doctrine or into a whole system of doctrine. (4) The change includes a

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 202.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 204-05.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 205-06.

sense of attaining to a higher life, or to emancipation or enlargement of the self. Not seldom there is victory over habits that brought self-condemnation. Now and then there is recovery from moral degradation and helplessness.<sup>13</sup>

In summary, Coe's understanding of conversion means the adoption of a new scale of measuring oneself and a step toward self-authentification. It is a socialization process of accepting fellowship with man as divine. (An equation is made between fellowship with man and fellowship with the divine.)<sup>14</sup> Coe has some similarity of thought with Starbuck and James. He also has distinct differences, however. There is more emphasis on influence from an external force with the outcome not being due to a growth process.

In the writings of Santa de Sanctis,<sup>15</sup> a Catholic scholar, we see yet another variation and contribution. He records in his book published in 1927, accounts of one of his case studies:

But my convert who had been an Anglican, observed: 'Even before conversion I experienced great pleasure in finding myself in a church of the Catholic religion.' Not habit therefore, but the pleasure of forming the

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<sup>13</sup>George A. Coe, The Psychology of Religion (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1916), p. 153.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 171-73.

<sup>15</sup>Santa de Sanctis, Religious Conversion (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1927).

habit, began the conversional process. It can be easily understood that participation in the sacraments, and the performance of the simple ceremonies which belong to the cult, assist in producing a complete conversion, and once the conversion is effected, strengthen it powerfully, as in the case of my Anglican, and many other converts.<sup>16</sup>

From this statement one might infer that true conversion is a conversion only to Catholicism. Sanctis, though, rejects such claims saying that conversion occurs ". . . in all times and among all peoples, no matter what their religion."<sup>17</sup> Conversion ". . . is suddenly ushered in by a complete alteration of character, or else by the appearance of some urgent moral need in short, with new psychic dispositions of the subject."<sup>18</sup> Sanctis saw conversion as the attainment "of peace and joy" after a series of crises.<sup>19</sup> He rejected, however, the claim that conversion was an adolescent phenomenon. (The period of adolescence was only "an extrinsic or indirect cause" which was "neither essential nor sufficient.")<sup>20</sup> In conclusion he wrote that "disease, age, endocrine variations, or the like" were not necessary causes. Of importance was the fact that an intellectual and moral regeneration takes place in the person.<sup>21</sup> (This may be an important factor in determining

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 43-44.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

what the necessary causes of conversion are.)

Elmer T. Clark, another thinker in the field of Psychology of Religion, came out two years after Sanctis with a book called The Psychology of Religious Awakening.<sup>22</sup> Clark used the term religious awakening rather than conversion. To him, such an awakening meant the moment when an individual formed a definite religious attitude and entered into a personal relationship with his God or became aware of his reaction to God.<sup>23</sup> Apart from his concept of awakening, Clark understood conversion in a more narrow definition to mean an emotional and radical experience in which there was ". . . a sudden change from irreligion or nonreligion to religion."<sup>24</sup> "The English word 'conversion' signifies a turning about, a definite change of front, a passing from one state of being to an altogether different state as a definite and specific act."<sup>25</sup>

Clark's purpose in his study of religious awakening was to show that a more radical phenomenon of conversion was not the only way to become religious. He felt that most writers concentrated on the more radical rather than

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<sup>22</sup>Elmer T. Clark, The Psychology of Religious Awakening (New York: Macmillan, 1929).

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

on the less emotional experience.

More recently Walter H. Clark has defined conversion as,

that type of spiritual growth or development which involves an appreciable change of direction concerning religious ideas and behavior. Most clearly and typically it denotes an emotional episode of illuminating suddenness, which may be deep or superficial, though it may also come about by a more gradual process.<sup>26</sup>

Clark sees three well-defined stages through which the convert passes. The first stage is one of unrest. There is an active mental struggle. In the second stage there is the crisis event which brings about a relaxation from the struggle. Finally, in the third stage, the convert experiences a sense of peace, release, and inner harmony with God.<sup>27</sup>

Other contemporary writers such as Paul Johnson<sup>28</sup> and Robert O. Ferm,<sup>29</sup> from the field of psychology of religion, hold similar views although they have not explained themselves in exactly the same way.

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<sup>26</sup>Walter H. Clark, The Psychology of Religion (New York: Macmillan, 1958), p. 191.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., pp. 193-95.

<sup>28</sup>Paul Johnson, Psychology of Religion (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1959).

<sup>29</sup>Robert O. Ferm, The Psychology of Christian Conversion (New York: Revell, 1959).

Taking into consideration the definitions of the various thinkers, the following stipulated definition of conversion is presented. In this paper conversion is defined as that process of change, sudden or gradual, in which a person becomes aware of his sin, repents, and accepts Jesus Christ as his Savior. Through this process the person enters into a meaningful relationship with God.



## CHAPTER II

### EIGHTEENTH, NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURY REPRESENTATIVES OF CONVERSION

Conversion has been a much discussed phenomenon within Christianity although it is not held to be the only way of accepting the Christian faith. The more common way was through baptism. The Roman Catholic Church as well as most Protestant denominations hold this position although some like the Anabaptists have believed that baptism of infants is not sufficient. They believed that only those who were old enough to understand the meaning of baptism were to be baptized. Baptism was the indication that one believed in the forgiveness of sins and the new life in Christ. Thus, for them the faith of the believer was the essential criteria for Baptism and acceptance into the Christian Church.

During the Protestant Reformation the major Reformers such as Luther, Calvin and Zwingli, were not greatly concerned with conversion because most of the people in Europe were already Christians. Rather their concern was in protesting against the practices and procedures of the church. For example Luther protested against the abuses in the practice of indulgences. For Luther it was through faith that one was justified rather than through indulgences or works. In general the Reformers' efforts were

directed toward challenging the traditional developments of the Church in the light of a very simple but positive message of God's grace. The concept of conversion became more important only at a later time as people began drifting away from the institutional churches. This concern for conversion can be especially seen during the period of the early American frontier as the writings of Francis Asbury in the eighteenth century illustrate. Asbury was selected as a representative of the eighteenth century because he played a key role in the development and spread of Methodism in America. The growth of Methodism is one of the most phenomenal among the Protestant denominations during the great revival in America. The writings of Horace Bushnell and of Paul Tillich, however, illustrate a different trend in thought on conversion. Bushnell was selected because he represented a new trend on the concept of conversion. For him conversion was not as important as it was for Asbury because the Christian churches in America were now well established and most of the people already claimed to be Christians. Thus, his emphasis was placed on the need to nurture a child in such a way that he will always feel in relationship with God.

In the twentieth century there is a further shift in the attitudes of people, and now there is an element of suspicion and distaste for conversion. There is little

emphasis placed on conversion such that writers like Paul Tillich deal with conversion as only one of the many elements in the Christian religion. Tillich represents the more analytical approach of the twentieth century toward the question of conversion.

#### Francis Asbury as a Representative of the Eighteenth Century

During the eighteenth century more and more people began moving out into the vast American frontier. This move was not only to acquire land but also to escape from the early intolerance of Puritanism. Thus much of the population was removed from the reaches of the established churches on the Atlantic seaboard. The result was that the vast populations in these great and growing English settlements were spiritually uncared for, and their religious needs constituted an important factor in the development of Methodism.<sup>1</sup> Also with the ever growing number of immigrants from Ireland, Germany, Scandinavia and southern Europe the need for preachers was continually growing.<sup>2</sup> In response to this great need Methodists came to the New World with the confidence and enthusiasm of winning the new American nation. This spirit is captured in the words of

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<sup>1</sup>Sydney G. Dimond, The Psychology of the Methodist Revival (London: Humphrey Milford, 1926), p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>Edwin S. Gaustad, Historical Atlas of Religion in America (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 45.

Francis Asbury who wrote in 1784, "O America! America! it will certainly be the glory of the world for religion."<sup>3</sup> Of the many lay evangelists who came to America between 1769 and 1773, Francis Asbury emerged as one of the most effective leaders. Let us look at this man and his evangelistic work and thoughts on conversion.

For Francis Asbury the doctrine of conversion stood as the motivating element behind his evangelistic zeal. It was this desire to convert others to Christ that led him to the New World. He wrote, "Whither am I going! To the New World. What to do? To gain honour? No, if I know my own heart. To get money? No: I am going to live to God, and to bring others so to do."<sup>4</sup>

From the beginning, the missionary spirit was deeply imbedded in Asbury. Every trip that he took through the American Frontier, long or short, was a missionary quest. Wherever he went, his preaching contained the theme of conversion.

Of his own conversion he says, "On a certain time when we were praying in my father's barn I believed the Lord pardoned my sins and justified my soul . . . I was

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>4</sup>Francis Asbury, The Journal and Letters (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958), I, 9.

happy, free from guilt and fear, and had power over sin, and felt great inward joy."<sup>5</sup> This is the experience to which he called men.

For him sermons were to be preached for the purpose of winning souls. He says, "If a sermon made no stir among the unconverted, brought conviction to no sinner, led to no decision, it had failed in its chief purpose."<sup>6</sup>

The two elements that stood out in Asbury's doctrine of conversion were the conviction of sin and the salvation of Jesus Christ. He believed that by preaching Jesus Christ one was convicted of his sins. This was the first step in the process of conversion. Going hand in hand with this was the concept of salvation. In Acts 13:26 we read, "Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent." Commenting on this text Asbury said:

This salvation; the gospel, to be sure; who the author, what the nature, means, conditions, spirituality, and degrees of this salvation; from whom it is sent, by whom, and to whom it is sent. It was sent to Jews first, afterward to the Gentiles, and

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<sup>5</sup>Ezra S. Tipple, Francis Asbury: The Prophet of the Long Road (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1916), p. 42.

<sup>6</sup>H. K. Carroll, Francis Asbury in the Making of American Methodism (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1923), p. 119.

continued to be sent, and is still sent to the children of men by the written Word, by the ministers of that Word, and by the influence of the Holy Spirit. The consequences of its reception--eternal life; of its rejection--everlasting damnation.<sup>7</sup>

The effects of the preaching of Asbury and others were far reaching. This effectiveness was due mainly to preaching for conversion and the personal witness of the ministers. They delivered their sermons with the conviction that they were divinely chosen messengers to the people. The message they gave was that of life and liberty from God. They, themselves, had experienced the joys of salvation so they preached with assurance their message of salvation.<sup>8</sup>

Another important factor which aided the spread of Methodism was the receptivity of the people. They were open and eager for the gospel. Asbury wrote,

Many of the people seem to be ripe for the gospel and ready to receive us. I humbly hope before long about seven preachers of us will spread seven or eight hundred miles, and preach in as many places as we are able to attend.<sup>9</sup>

At this point it seems that several elements can be lifted up as important for a conversion experience. These are the proclamation of the gospel, the personal witness of

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<sup>7</sup>Tipple, op. cit., p. 231.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 203.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 189.

the preacher and the receptivity of the convert. Another point which is important to keep in mind, though it is not directly related to the dynamic features of conversion, is the mobility of the preachers. The Methodist circuit riders moved forward with the advancing frontier. They moved with the pioneers everywhere and were responsible for the amazing growth of Methodism in America. From this one could conclude that it is important to go out to the people and meet them where they are rather than thinking in terms of establishing a church and waiting for the people to come to it. These circuit riders confirmed the importance of an evangelistic outreach.

Asbury did not pretend to understand the dynamics of conversion, but rather he only confesses that it does occur. He says,

Many things were said of the mysteries of God-creation, the winds, and our own existence in embryo. We have demonstration of these mysteries, and such we also have of redemption, conviction, conversion, sanctification, and the adorable trinity, and frequent and obvious demonstrations of the power of God and his Word instantaneously manifested. We do not know how these things are, but we know that they do exist.<sup>10</sup>

Instead of trying to analyze critically the dynamics of conversion, he was satisfied to leave it in God's hands. He accepted the dynamic process as part of God's activity to convict, convert and sanctify men.

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 533.

Asbury believed that the Holy Spirit was active in the conversion of a person. In his entry into his Journal on March 22, 1775 he wrote,

I preached in the evening from I Sam. 10:6: 'The Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man.' Here I took occasion to show: 1. the operations of the Spirit on the heart of man--to convince, convert, and sanctify; 2. the effects of these operations: (1) A strong inclination to speak for God--this is the duty of every Christian; (2) A great change--in judgment, desire, spirit, temper and practice.<sup>11</sup>

Here we can see a sketch of what Asbury thought to be the dynamics of conversion. It was the spirit that initiated the experience of conversion. The Spirit convinces man of his human predicament and convicted him of his sin.

Asbury held that repentance was a necessary condition to grace. He believed that all men needed to repent because of man's fallen nature as well as because of his actual transgressions. Repentance was made possible for men because of ". . . the gift of Christ, the death of Christ, the agency of the Spirit, the preaching of the Gospel," these are all "the means of grace."<sup>12</sup> These conditions and elements made it possible for man to repent and be saved. The Spirit did not stop there but went on

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<sup>11</sup>Francis Asbury, The Heart of Asbury's Journal (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1904), p. 82.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 572.



to convert and sanctify man. Asbury understood sanctification to mean that through Christ one was saved, redeemed, and liberated from his sins.<sup>13</sup> The results of this conversion was a dramatic change in a person. He is turned into a new man such that a new religious awareness and God-consciousness is present. In Asbury's words, one has "a strong inclination to speak for God." By this Asbury meant that one became a messenger of God to proclaim the gospel and witness his faith to others. This he thought was the duty of every Christian. There was also development and growth in personal maturity. There was a deeper spiritual dimension in one's life and the desire for better things. One was able to make sounder judgments and better able to control his temper. Finally he was able to practice his faith.

Another example of conversion may be seen in his entry on February 2, 1779. Asbury wrote,

Our love feast began at once, and public worship at twelve o'clock. The operations of the Holy Spirit were very powerful in the congregation; so that there was a general melting, and among the young people there were outcries and deep distress. Here was a blessed prospect. God is gracious beyond the power of language to describe. Both preachers and people were exceedingly quickened.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 431.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 141.

Here again we see that Asbury understood the Holy Spirit to be the dynamic force behind the conversion experience. When he says "there was a general melting," he meant that the Spirit was melting away the cold heartedness of the people. It was breaking down the barriers that were keeping the people from committing themselves to Christ. Another element, that is common in a conversion experience is the sense of sin. In this incident there were outcries and deep distress among the young people. They were emotionally shaken. The fact that Asbury mentions only the young people is interesting. A possible explanation for this is that because the youth are much more impressionable and responsive emotionally than adults, they were more expressive of their emotions. The result of the activity of the Spirit, however, affected both young and old, both clergy and laymen. Asbury says "both preachers and people were exceedingly quickened." Here we witness a different type of conversion. Here it is the quickening of the heart which means a deeper awareness and commitment to Christ. There is no great change as experienced by those mentioned in the previous example.

Asbury realized that at times conversion took a long period of incubation such as in the case of Godfrey Waters. Of this incident he wrote,

I could speak with more faith than usual upon Acts 2:37, for, behold Henry Waters' son, many years insensible to the things of God, was converted! When we parted with Godfrey he looked after us with wishful, willing eyes and heart. That the dear soul should sit nearly thirty years under the gospel, unconverted and almost unconcerned, how strange! and should be at last visited and converted, how merciful!<sup>15</sup>

Here again Asbury does not try to analyze nor understand why it took such a long period before one was converted. He only humbly says, "how merciful."

From Asbury's brief account it is impossible to say anything about what may have gone on within Godfrey Waters. All that can be said is that evidently Godfrey seemed "unconcerned."

That conversion effected great change is witnessed to by the change of behavior of whole towns. Asbury wrote,

My heart was greatly enlarged in town especially. There is very apparent alteration in this place. There is not so much drunkenness and neglect of the ordinances as in former times; and the people are much more inclined to attend the place of public worship. So that, on the whole, I entertain a lively hope that the Lord will yet raise up for himself a large society in the town of Baltimore.<sup>16</sup>

The fruits of conversion were visibly witnessable. There was less drunkenness and more respect for law. There was also a greater participation in public worship.

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp. 492-93.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 83.

In October of 1800 Asbury attended his first camp meeting where he witnessed at least thirty souls converted. Of this he says,

Fires blazing here and there dispelled the darkness, and the shouts of the redeemed captives, and the cries of precious souls struggling into life, broke the silence of midnight. The weather was delightful; as if heaven smiled, while mercy flowed in abundant streams of salvation to perishing sinners.<sup>17</sup>

The camp meeting must have made a deep impact on Asbury for from 1802 on, he advocated the use of camp meetings as a means of evangelism.

In the early stages, the camp meetings were boisterous and disorderly; however, Asbury brought order to them by bringing them under strict control. By 1806 the meetings were well-developed and carefully planned. On May 11 of the same year he wrote,

There were between eighty and one hundred official members present, about one thousand Methodists; and some presumed about six thousand souls were on the ground at different times. The people were so dispersed, and there was such a continual coming and going, I had no means of judging. We had great order and great power from the beginning to the end. I judged two hundred souls were made the subjects of grace in its various operations of conviction, conversion, sanctification, and reclamation.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 481.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 575.

By 1811, it was estimated that there were four to five hundred camp meetings held annually and by 1816 the meetings had increased to over six hundred.<sup>19</sup>

On the matter of emotional display at these camp meetings, Asbury endured rather than encouraged it. For him, the change brought about by conversion in one's life was the true test of God's convincing and converting power. One's emotional excitement was not a reliable test for God's working in the soul.<sup>20</sup> Asbury's influential attitude towards this aspect was especially felt. The boisterous and highly emotion-charged meetings were soon changed into solemn, reverent meetings.

As a concluding statement it would be helpful to outline four outstanding features in Asbury's view of conversion. The first is that in conversion a person is uniquely changed. Secondly, the change was effected by the Holy Spirit which convicted men of their sins and converted them. The result of this conversion was a change in one's world view. There was a new attitude toward himself, his neighbors, the world and God. A significant spiritual

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<sup>19</sup>Wade C. Barclay, History of Methodist Missions (New York: The Board of Missions and Church Extension of the Methodist Church, 1949), II, 328-29.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 335.

relationship was established between the convert and God. Finally, with conversion came a new sense of joy, freedom and power. For Asbury the conviction of sin and the salvation of Jesus Christ were dynamic elements for conversion. He stated that the first step in the process of conversion was the conviction of a person for his sins. He believed that by preaching Jesus Christ one was convicted for his sins and offered the hope of salvation.

#### Horace Bushnell as a Representative of the Nineteenth Century

During the nineteenth century evangelism was recognized throughout most of Protestantism as the central purpose and task of the Church. The attitude was that every person needed to be converted because his original nature was estranged from God and incapable of a satisfactory relationship with him. Thus, a spiritual conversion in the inner life of a person was necessary before he was capable of religious life and growth. Christian education was viewed as the ". . . hand maiden of evangelism"<sup>21</sup> Its function was to ". . . provide Bible knowledge as a basis for intelligent and informed conversion and as a means of guiding and instructing the con-

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<sup>21</sup>Harry C. Munro, Protestant Nurture (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1956), p. 132.

verted Christian to 'walk in newness of life.'<sup>22</sup>

Against this position Horace Bushnell wrote his book titled Christian Nurture.<sup>23</sup> Bushnell did not believe that Christian education was only to prepare one for conversion. Secondly, he did not hold the view that everyone needed to be converted. A child could be nurtured as a Christian. At first, his concept of nurture was abhorred and almost universally opposed but gradually it gained ground. Today we call what Bushnell advocated Christian education. Generally speaking, it is the gradual growth process which helps a child to grow up as a Christian, never knowing himself to be otherwise.

Bushnell was a New England clergyman of the Congregational Church.<sup>24</sup> He and other liberal theologians of the nineteenth century revolted against the Calvinistic understanding of God's transcendence. Bushnell thought of God ". . . as the indwelling reality of one organic and developing world-process."<sup>25</sup> Thus a child who participated

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Horace Bushnell, Christian Nurture (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1886).

<sup>24</sup>H. Shelton Smith, Faith and Nurture (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), p. 5.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 5-6.

in the organic life of a Christian family is thought to be within the Kingdom of God. Bushnell sought to break down the dichotomy between the natural and the supernatural world and also the idea that conversion was a necessary mode of accepting the Christian faith. Conversion was mostly necessary for those outside the Christian fold.

Central to Bushnell's doctrine of religious nurture is the idea that children are to be growing Christians. He did not see them as "sinners in the hands of an angry God."<sup>26</sup> Children could grow as God intended them to grow. (Also God was not an angry God but a loving God.) One could be led to seek what is good and right when a child just as well as when he was twenty. The only difference was that he was converted to good at an earlier age.<sup>27</sup>

Bushnell believed that Christian nurture begins from the beginning of life and advances through the stages of growth toward maturity.<sup>28</sup> Thus during the early years of infancy, when the child is most impressionable and plastic, it is important that he receive the proper train-

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<sup>26</sup>Clarice Bowman, "What Faith, What Nurture?" in Religious Education L1:5(September-October 1956), 382.

<sup>27</sup>Bushnell, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 233.



ing from his parents. What he learns is the seed that determines the future development of his character. Bushnell says,

So when a child, during the whole period of impressions, or passive recipiencies, previous to the development of his responsible will, lives in the life and feeling of his parents, and they in the molds of the Spirit, they will, of course, be shaping themselves in him, or him in themselves, and the effects wrought in him will be preparations of what he will by-and-by do from himself; seeds, in that manner possibly, even of a regenerate life and character.<sup>29</sup>

Here Bushnell wants to stress the importance of learning through experience. For example a child would not know the meaning of love unless he has experienced it from his parents. Similarly the word God will have no meaning for the child until he has made some association of such a being with the term God.<sup>30</sup> At first his associations with "God" will be very simple but as he grows this concept will take on more complex and sophisticated dimensions.

The important thing is that parents,

. . . seek to teach a feeling than a doctrine; to bathe the child in their own feeling of love to God, and dependence on him, and contrition for wrong before him, bearing up their child's heart in their own, not fearing to encourage every good motion they can call into exercise; to make what is good, happy

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 238.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 240.

and attractive, what is wrong, odious and hateful; then as the understanding advances, to give it food suited to its capacity, opening upon it, gradually the more difficult views of Christian doctrine and experience.<sup>31</sup>

Contrary to these positive aspects of life, the negative can also develop in a similar way. Wherever there is mismanagement or neglect, the seeds of vice and misery are planted.

Thus the child by a continual worry of his little life, under abusive words, and harsh, flashy tempers, grows to be a bed of nettles in all his personal tempers, and will so be prepared to break out in the age of choice, into almost any vice of ill-nature."<sup>32</sup>

Here, then, what the child learns in early life is very important for his future life. Putting it in Bushnell's terms, what is planted in the infant will influence his growth. Using this line of thought Bushnell offers an interesting comment of the concept of Christian conversion. He holds that most Christian conversions are an outgrowth of what was implanted in the infant. Conversion only restored the activity and the more fully developed results of a predisposed state of sanctification. This sense of sanctification was instilled in the unconscious which burst forth after the striving and struggling

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 247.

of the human will through conversion.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, Bushnell concluded that the most important age for Christian nurture was from the first year through the third. One half of the development of a child's character is done during this period because the child is completely under the will of the parents.<sup>34</sup> This obviously places a tremendous responsibility upon the parents.

In speaking of the responsibility of parents to nurture their children Bushnell says that no parent is sufficiently or properly qualified to raise his children in Christian nurture. This is because all men are weak and defective. That we come to Christ and have begun to be disciples does not qualify us for holy nurture nor the safe ordering of our families.<sup>35</sup> This certainly seems to be a discouraging note for parents. However parents need not despair for God overcomes the defects of man. They need only to have faith and more perfectly and wholly trust in God. In Bushnell's words,

Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ then as a complete investiture, and there will be no poison flowing down upon your children, from any thing in your life and example . . . Whoever comes thus into God's full love, to be in it and of it, has a true equipment for the family administration.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., pp. 247-8.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., pp. 248-9.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 267.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., pp. 269-70.

This, to this author, is the meaning of the grace of God. God fulfills man's needs and inadequacies to bring a sense of unity to life.

In the most basic sense, Bushnell saw grace as fulfillment of the child's physical needs. He argued, "if his soul is to be a temple of the Holy Ghost, then his body must be."<sup>37</sup> In so arguing he believed that the child came to know the meaning of the grace of God by experiencing the physical satisfaction of his body, i.e., by receiving food when he was hungry and drink when he was thirsty.<sup>38</sup> He says one's parental charge lies

. . . in giving your children such a nurture in the body, as makes them superior to the body; subordinates the passions, and evens the tempers of the body; prepares them to a state of robust and massive healthiness; gives them clearer heads, and nobler sentiments of truth; preparing them, in that manner, to be good scholars, to have their affectional nature opened wide by a general love, to have their perceptive feeling quickened to all highest forms of beauty and good, and so to have them ready, more and more ready, for a state of eternally unsealed affinity with God.<sup>39</sup>

In the feeding of a child's body, every aspect of a child's life, even to the highest spiritual and religious nature are touched.

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 272.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., pp. 275-78.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 287.

Another mode of developing Christian nurture is through the conjugal family group. The family is to be a government that ". . . governs, uses authority, maintains law and rules, by a binding and loosing power over the moral nature of the child."<sup>40</sup> This government must use love as its authority and preside in the beneficent order of law--a law under God. The child later comes to the cognition of the universal authority of God. But this cognition comes about only when the parental government strives toward Christian ends. These ends are to bring into the family ". . . the noblest ideas of truth, and forgiveness and self-sacrifice, and assert a pitch of virtue in the house high enough to be inspiring."<sup>41</sup> In so doing the family government will rule with genuine authority and power. Bushnell says, "As it rules for God, and with God, God will be in it; otherwise it is mortal self-assertion only."<sup>42</sup>

Bushnell thought of the family as a converting ordinance. The family is responsible for developing a sense of obedience to God. Obedience involves the deepest elements of personal principle and character. By being obedient to God the child will be brought to doing what is

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 315.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 319.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.,

right and good because it is right and good and "not because it is unsafe or appears badly, to do wrong."<sup>43</sup> This means that a child is to be taught the positive aspects of behavior rather than learning to be good as a means of avoiding punishment. He must learn to be good for goodness sake. A child so taught will more likely continue to go in the way he should even when he is old enough to make his own decisions.

Bushnell goes on to deal with other areas of existence. He discusses the observances of Christian holidays and Sundays. His main concern was to show that when parents placed special value on special days and faithfully observed them, the child too would come to place value on them. Likewise with other activities. They too were seen as good by children when value was placed on them by parents. Thus certain value judgments were assimilated into the value structure of a child's personality.<sup>44</sup>

On the matter of Christian teaching for very young children Bushnell saw value in teaching them to memorize the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Apostle's Creed, hymns and verses of scripture because in so doing the child learned something of salvation.<sup>45</sup> More important,

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 320.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., pp. 338-65.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 369.

however, was to teach children by being an example for them. Bushnell says genuine teaching

. . . will be that which interprets the truth to the the child's feeling by living example, and makes him love the truth afterwards for the teacher's sake. It is a great thing for a child, in all the after life, to 'know of whom' he learned these things, and to see a godly father, or a faithful mother, in them. No truth is really taught by words, or interpreted by intellectual and logical methods. Truth must be lived into meaning, before it can be truly known.<sup>46</sup>

A child must be able to experience truth in a tangible sense. He must experience it through the life of his teacher, only then will truth become real for him. If a teacher only spoke of truth without exemplifying it in his life, there would be no value in what he taught. A teacher must practice what he teaches if he wants his students to place value on what they learn.

In bringing the thoughts of Bushnell to a conclusion, the following may be a fitting summary.

The basic presupposition of Bushnell is that children are not heathen or aliens but are in and of the household of faith. Parents therefore, are not to force them into an emotional crisis and conversion. Rather their teaching is to lead them into growth in an atmosphere of grace. Of this Bushnell says

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 370.

. . . his is the special advantage of a true sacramental nurture in the promise, that it does not put the child on passing a crisis, where he is thrown out of balance not unlikely, and becomes artificially conscious of himself, but it leaves him to be always increasing his faith, and reaching forward in the simplest and most dutiful manner, to become what God is helping him to be.<sup>47</sup>

Thus children are always to be shown how to be good rather than emphasizing the bad. If they fail they are to be shown how God will help them if they ask him and trust in him for help. A child could be nurtured in such a way that he never felt apart from God. In this manner they will continually be passing through little conversion experiences and moving on to a more mature faith.

Bushnell's concept of nurture as a growth process is very similar in part to this writer's understanding of gradual conversion. There is a continual re-evaluation and re-direction of one's life. There may be no specific event to which one could point. However, every experience of re-evaluation and re-direction is for this writer a conversion experience.

Though Bushnell's central emphasis was on the nurturing of children, his theory could also apply to adults. Christian nurture, to them, would mean,

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 381.



. . . the total effort of the church to help each person to dedicate himself to Christ and to develop the understandings, the attitudes and the skills that he needs in order to be Christian in his personal life and in his relations with others.<sup>48</sup>

For this writer this process of nurture is also the process of gradual conversion.

It must begin at the point of each person's immediate experience of need. He can be led to recognize his ultimate need for a deeper relationship with God and the possibility of meeting it through faith in Jesus Christ. Although Bushnell does not stress the concept of sin he believed that every person was in need of an ever growing faith. Changes must occur, though gradual, such that old ways are given up for new ones. Only when one puts into practice Christian principles can it be said that the conversion process is taking place.

#### Paul Tillich as a Representative of the Twentieth Century

The twentieth century differs from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in that it has taken a more objective look at the concept of conversion. In the eighteenth century emphasis was placed on converting men with no attempt to study the dynamics involved. Thus men like

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<sup>48</sup>Lee J. Gable, Christian Nurture Through the Church (New York: National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., 1955), p. 11.

Asbury were content with accepting it as a mysterious fact. In the nineteenth century there was still an emphasis on the need for sudden conversion but men like Bushnell began to introduce the concept of Christian nurture as an alternative process to accept and grow in Christian faith.

In the twentieth century there is a further shift in interest such that thinkers today are more interested in an analytical approach to conversion. They want to study the dynamics of conversion rather than emphasize the need for conversion. This shift is the result of a popular dislike for the concept of conversion.

As in the case of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there are several thinkers who could be discussed as great twentieth century representatives, but for this paper I will present the thought of Paul Tillich. Tillich has been considered by some as the last of the classical systematic theologians. Tillich took three volumes to write this theology. He discusses the concept of conversion in the third volume.

Tillich begins by defining several types of conversion. He refers to the Hebrew word *shubh* which means a turning around on one's way, especially in the realm of the social and political matters. It means "... a turning away from injustice toward justice, from inhumanity

to humanity, from idols to God."<sup>49</sup> The second word is the Greek *metanoia* which is similar to the Hebrew definition but is related to the mind, ". . . which changes from one direction to another, from the temporal to the eternal, from oneself to God."<sup>50</sup> The third is *conversio*, a Latin word, which ". . . unites the spatial images with the intellectual content."<sup>51</sup> All three of these words imply the negation of the existing direction or position and the acceptance of a new and opposite one.

For Tillich Christian conversion is the experience of encountering the New Being of Jesus as the Christ. This New Being is the objective reality which confronts man with the message of a new reality to which he is asked to turn. In the person of Jesus we witness a life and will totally dedicated to God. This unity of a man with God is the new reality or being. If a man chooses to accept it he participates in the objective power of the New Being which lifts him from his state of estrangement to a partial unity with God. But, it is only partial unity in the sense that conversion is an on-going process.

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<sup>49</sup>Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952-1963), III, 219.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

Man's response requires courage--courage to make a choice. He must decide whether he'll accept the possibility of the New Being as his and make a conscious attempt to exemplify something of Jesus' dynamic character. For Tillich, man's response could not be due to faith because faith is a God-given gift to him when he is grasped by the Divine Presence. (The Divine Presence is also called the Spirit of God or the Holy Spirit.) It is the power which justifies and creates the New Being in an individual.

When Spiritual Presence grasps man, it creates in him an unambiguous life. Here his existential nature is united with his essential nature giving him new meaning and purpose in life. This experience is a process of growth. Tillich defines growth as ". . . dependent on the polar element of dynamics in so far as growth is the process by which a formed reality goes beyond itself to another form which both preserves and transforms the original reality."<sup>52</sup> This results in a continual reformulation of one's being. Thus for Tillich there is no moment in the life of a person which could be pointed to as the beginning participation in the New Being. He suggests the process of conversion goes on in the unconscious of a person long before it breaks into the conscious. This process holds for those who

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid., III, 50.

experience what seems to be a spontaneous conversion in the Pauline sense as well as for those who are nurtured in the Christian life since birth.<sup>53</sup>

At this point, Tillich's position is similar to that of Bushnell. Both believed that conversion was a process of change--a process that continues throughout life. Asbury would join Tillich and Bushnell in saying that conversion was actualized only when the principles of the Christian faith were exemplified in one's daily life.

The New Being can best be understood in Jesus as the Christ. The being of Jesus bridged the gap between his essential and existential nature. He exemplified in his life the will of God. His will and God's were in unity and not opposed as is generally the case. In Jesus the existential estrangement of man from God was overcome. His words, deeds, and suffering do not make him the Christ, rather they are expressions of his New Being.<sup>54</sup>

The being of Jesus, "the Word", is a self manifestation of God to humanity.<sup>55</sup> Because Jesus is "the Word" his words are expressions of "the Word" and have the power to

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., III, 218-19.      <sup>54</sup>Ibid., II, 121.

<sup>55</sup>For Tillich, Jesus as "the Word" is the *final* self-manifestation of God to humanity. This author would hesitate to limit God as Tillich does.

create the New Being. When Jesus Christ is proclaimed to men, it is also the revelation of God himself. Thus when an individual accepts the word and uses it as his guide for living he participates in the New Being. In other words conversion takes place.

Secondly, Jesus' deeds indicate a new relationship between God and man. The unity between essence and existence implies a new law. An individual no longer follows his old way of life. New goals are accepted, goals which direct him into a deeper relationship with God.

Tillich divided his section on conversion into three parts, dealing with the dynamics of Christian Conversion from the standpoint of God, man, and the process involved.

First, Tillich always saw God as the initiator of an act. Thus he says that man in relation to God cannot do anything without him. He must receive in order to act. "New Being precedes new acting."<sup>56</sup> Because God initiated the act of redemption in Jesus, man is now able to turn away from his life of sin.

In order to overcome existential estrangement and its self-destructive consequences God participated in them through Jesus of Nazareth. Through Jesus he took upon himself these elements of estrangement and transformed them to

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., II, 79.

his glory. God's act of atonement is most clearly seen in the events of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. It is in this glory that God asks men to participate. He confronts the human spirit with his divine Spirit and drives it to self-transcendence and to the question of ultimate concern.<sup>57</sup> Asbury and Bushnell, like Tillich, saw God actively participating in the conversion of men.

The New Being (Spiritual Presence), says Tillich, has an atoning effect upon the being it encounters.<sup>58</sup> It fulfills the finite being by overcoming estrangement or human guilt. This divine act is effective, however, only if man accepts it. For Asbury it was the activity of the Holy Spirit that converted man. (Tillich uses the term New Being instead of the Holy Spirit.)

The New Being is primarily mediated to man as the Word of God. It creates in him the question of ultimate concern. The message of the New Being is one of Judgment and Grace. Judgment stands over man's estrangement from God. He sees himself as sinner under the judgment of the New Being. Grace is the message of agape. It confronts man as love and accepts him in spite of his state of estrangement. In the New Being, man sees the element of

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid., III, 112.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., II, 170.

hope through its expectation of the re-establishment of the holiness, greatness, and dignity of man. In so doing, the New Being as agape, takes man into the transcendent unity of unambiguous life.<sup>59</sup> It is a life that is striving toward the fulfillment of one's highest potentials and in constant concern for others.

Secondly, Tillich begins with the statement that the history of religion is the history of man's attempts and failures to save himself. It is man's quest for the New Being. For Tillich, man always plays only a passive role in conversion. Thus he says, "the question of salvation can be asked only if salvation is already at work, no matter how fragmentarily."<sup>60</sup> The question of man's salvation can be asked only when he is already in the process of salvation. He will not even realize that he is estranged from God unless he is confronted by the New Being. He, therefore, is faced with a decision. When he accepts the New Being he participates in its creative dynamics. The potential of fulfilling his life is his. If he rejects the New Being, God's justice allows destiny to run its course of estrangement, the end of which is non-being.

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid., III, 137-38.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., II, 80.



This freedom cannot be denied man because it belongs to the structure of being itself. God is being itself; thus, he would cease to be God if he denied any being its freedom.<sup>61</sup>

Finally, Tillich suggests four principles which are the manifestations of the New Being as process. These principles do not follow one another; they occur simultaneously in the experience of Christian conversion. The first principle is one's increasing awareness. Tillich says, ". . . man in the process of sanctification becomes increasingly aware of his actual situation and of the forces struggling around him and his humanity, but also becomes aware of the answers to the questions implied in this situation."<sup>62</sup> He becomes aware of the ambiguities of life (consciousness of sin) in himself, as in everyone, but also of the life affirming power of the New Being. Such awareness includes a sensitivity toward the demands of one's own growth and the degree of his authenticity in the life of the Spirit.

Next is the increasing freedom he experiences apart from the law. "The more one is reunited with his true being under the impact of the Spirit, the more one is free from the commandments of the law."<sup>63</sup> When one lives under

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., II, 174.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., III, p. 231.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., III, 232.

the Spirit, his behavior will be above reproach. Just as a good tree by its nature bears good fruit, so Spiritual man will by nature do good deeds. Tillich says, however, "the fact that reunion is fragmentary implies that freedom from the law is always fragmentary."<sup>64</sup> Man is still subject to the law.

The third principle is an increasing relatedness to the other. It implies the freedom to overcome self-seclusion and to relate to another as "thou". Relatedness needs the vertical dimension of "the eternal Thou" in order to be actualized on a horizontal dimension. For Tillich, a mature self-relatedness is the conquest of self-elevation and self-contempt by self-acceptance. A reunion of one's self

. . . is created by transcending both the self as subject, which tries to impose itself in terms of self-control and self-discipline on the self as object, and the self as object, which resists such imposition in terms of self-pity and flight from one's self. As the process of sanctification approaches a more mature self-relatedness, the individual is more spontaneous, more self-affirming, without self-elevation or self-humiliation.<sup>65</sup>

Here the self achieves a fuller self-identification and authenticity.

Lastly is the growing sense of self-transcendence.

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

This is the continuous movement in the direction of ultimate concern. It encircles the realm of the holy which is "the attitude of devotion toward that which is ultimate."<sup>66</sup> In every experience of Christian conversion the New Being lifts the human spirit into the sphere of the unambiguous life. This transcendence is ever moving toward maturity; it is never complete.

For Tillich the question, "What must one do to be grasped by the New Being?" cannot be answered. This is because any answer offered would be an indication of what one must do to be saved, and the concept of human initiation is contrary to the Protestant understanding of justification by grace through faith. Tillich, however, feels that if one questions with existential seriousness, the answer is implied in the question. "He who is ultimately concerned about his state of estrangement and about the possibility of reunion with the ground and aim of its being is already in the grip of the Spiritual Presence."<sup>67</sup> Unless one is already in the process of conversion he cannot ask this question of salvation.

In a sense Tillich's final analysis is similar to that of Asbury. Asbury was satisfied to state that the

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid., III, 236.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., III, 223.

Holy Spirit converted man. In a similar way Tillich says that no definite answer can be given to the question of how an individual is converted.

From the investigation of the thoughts of Asbury, Bushnell and Tillich one could conclude that conversion must be thought of as an on-going process even when there is a sudden experience. Secondly, in the process, one is confronted with his state of sin, is convicted and repents. For Asbury and Tillich it is the Holy Spirit that convicts and converts. Man does not initiate the act--he only responds to the activity of the Spirit. Bushnell, on the other hand, felt that we had a greater responsibility. He believed that it was everyone's job continually to re-evaluate his life and redirect it toward God.

Thirdly, conversion results in a unique personality change. The individual now has a new outlook on himself, the world and God.

Finally, a new spiritual relationship is established between a person and God.

In addition to the above Bushnell's position of Christian nurture lifts up the importance of learning about the Christian faith, in so doing one gains insight to the problems concerning himself and his faith. He believed that in this way one developed a more mature faith. One could be nurtured from childhood into the Christian faith and not

need to have a sudden conversion experience.

All three of these writers accepted the fact of conversion but placed different emphasis on the matter.

Asbury tended to stress conversion of a more sudden nature because this was the emphasis in the eighteenth century.

The conditions in his day demanded a radical change. Men were to be convicted of their sins and converted to a new mode of life. Asbury, however, did not deny that conversion could be a gradual process. Bushnell did not stress sudden conversion but spoke in terms of Christian nurture.

It was stated earlier that the concept of nurture was similar to what this writer calls gradual conversion.

Tillich on the other hand did not stress either type of conversion. He accepted both and concentrated his thoughts on the dynamics of conversion. A closer look at both types of conversion will be helpful.

## CHAPTER III

### TWO BASIC TYPES OF CONVERSION

#### Sudden Conversion

In a sudden conversion experience, the person involved becomes suddenly conscious of his experience. He finds himself being profoundly changed. This, he feels, is caused by some external force rather than any personal or internal force, and he believes it is the power of God.

The cause of sudden conversion is due to some internal conflict. This may be conscious or unconscious. In the case of a conscious internal conflict there are strong polar forces operating within a person. The convert stands between the desire to give himself to Christ and the resistance against this desire. The latter means one would rather be in control of his life. When such is the case, conversion takes place when one of two things happens. First, the forces of resistance are overcome. The resistance of self-will may be overcome by the powerful suggestive forces of evangelism. The second possibility for conversion is through the self surrender of the convert. He may feel he can no longer resist his desire to give himself to Christ or he may feel he can no longer live in a state of sin and needs Christ's help. In all of the above situations, the convert is consciously aware of his internal

struggle. An example of this type of conversion is cited by James.

T.W.B., a convert of Nettleton's, being brought to an acute paroxysm of conviction of sin, ate nothing all day, locked himself in his room in the evening in complete despair, crying aloud, 'How long, O Lord, how long?' After repeating this and similar language, he says, 'several times, *I seemed to sink away into a state of insensibility*. When I came to myself again, I was on my knees, praying not for myself but for others. I felt submission to the will of God, willing that he should do with me as should seem good in his sight. My concern seemed all lost in concern for others.'<sup>1</sup>

It is important to point out that here the concept of sin was the motivating factor for conversion.

Another type of internal conflict is where the convert is unaware of any inner struggle. In this case the conflict may take place in his unconscious mind. Or the person may have been able to suppress the conflict for the moment. In any case, it is understandable why, when conversion takes place, the convert is likely to believe his experience is totally effected by an external power. Not being aware of his internal struggle, he is not likely to consider it a factor leading to his conversion. An example of this type of sudden conversion is that of Paul.

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<sup>1</sup>William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience (New York: Modern Library, 1929), p. 211.

In many previous studies of Paul the book of Acts has been used as the major source of information. Today, however, this method has been questioned. New Testament scholars are now asking if it is not more important to use Paul's written letters rather than what was written about him at a later time. Acts was not written as a biography of Paul, its main interest was in the expansion of the Church.

In reading Paul's letters one should also distinguish between the authentic ones and those that are attributed to him. Today the following are accepted as being authentic: Galatians, Corinthians, Romans, Philippians and Philemon.

Another matter to keep in mind is Paul's own understanding of his conversion experience. He viewed it as a new understanding of his Jewish tradition and not as a change from Judaism to Christianity. Jesus Christ was the true consummation of what had gone before in his religious tradition. Paul also came to understand that he was now saved by faith rather than by works. To be a follower of Christ, to him, was to be a Jew in the purest form.

It is found that almost all of Paul's autobiographical statements is in Galatians 1:11-17 and ICorinthians 15:3-11. Both are written in a similar mood--an earnest defense of Paul's right to call himself an apostle.

According to the letter to the Galatians (1:11-17),



three facts definitely stand out--(1) God revealed his son to Paul (v. 16); (2) Paul received the gospel through a revelation (v. 12); and (3) he was called to be an apostle (v. 15).

In I Corinthians (15:3-11, 9:1), Paul emphasizes that Christ revealed himself to him (15:8). This revelation was a phenomenon of a bright light--a light shining in his heart (II Cor. 4:6). From this account, one might conclude that the experience was internal.. The matter is not that simple. In the account recorded in II Cor. 12:1-4, he speaks of visions and revelations of the Lord. "I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven--whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know, God Knows." On the other hand, in Philip-  
pians 3:8, he speaks only of knowing Christ. What then are we to say about Paul's claim of seeing the Risen Lord?

The secondary accounts (Acts 9:1-29; 22:3-21; 26:12-18) present another view. In Acts 9, as in the accounts in Acts 22 and 26, Paul sees a heavenly light shining around him. In chapter nine, those with him hear the voice but do not see anything (v.7) while in chapter twenty-two, they see the light but do not hear anything (v. 9). These inconsistencies within the same book indicate that they must have come from different sources. They should serve to warn us that they cannot be taken as primary sources in

studying Paul. Another problem in regard to source material is that the chronology in Acts is not in agreement with that of the letters. Also the Paul of Acts is different from the Paul of his letters. For these reasons Acts cannot be used as a primary source.

At the present taking only the primary sources into account, the following points stand out in Paul's conversion.

It is clear that Paul was a vigorous persecutor of the Jews who followed Jesus. He said,

For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it; and I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age, among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the tradition of my fathers.<sup>2</sup>

What changed his life completely--turning him from a vigorous persecutor to an apostle of Christ? To his thinking, his reason was he was grasped by Christ.<sup>3</sup> It was Christ who changed him. As such, it was an act from an external force.

Johannes Munck presents the thesis that Paul went to Damascus completely convinced that what he was doing was

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<sup>2</sup>Galatians 1:13-14.

<sup>3</sup>G. J. Inglis, "St. Paul's Conversion in his Epistles" Theology: XXXIV (April, 1937), 223.

right and favorable to God. Thus, he had no sense of guilt. There was no preparation on his part, conscious or unconscious.<sup>4</sup>

G. J. Inglis, sees a more personal involvement. He feels that although God was seen as the prime mover and Paul as the respondent, the event occurred only within the sphere of Paul's heart, mind, and will. It was an event within the depths of his own personality.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, H. G. Wood and Bultmann see the conversion as the surrendering by Paul of his previous understanding of himself and the submission to God's judgment made known in the Cross event. The result of this surrender was the conviction "that Jesus had been raised from the dead and is seated at the right hand of power."<sup>6</sup> For Wood and Bultmann then, the conversion was the result of God's initiative and Paul's surrender to Him. The result was a reformation and a new mode of thought.

These theories all agree that the experience itself broke in upon Paul suddenly, but they disagree on the matter

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<sup>4</sup>Johannes Munck, Paul and the Salvation of Mankind (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1959), p. 15.

<sup>5</sup>Inglis, op. cit., p. 228.

<sup>6</sup>H. G. Wood, "The Conversion of St. Paul: Its Nature, Antecedents and Consequences," New Testament Studies, I (May 1955), 281.

of Paul's participation. Munck holds the position that Paul was completely passive and did not prepare for it. On the other hand, Inglis, Wood and Bultmann suggest that there was some preparation on Paul's part.

In order to get to the heart of the matter, an attempt must be made to reconstruct certain elements in the life of Paul.

As a youth, Paul lived in the Hellenistic world. Secondary sources name the city of Tarsus as the place. Just when he was born is not known. One conjecture is that his birth took place about fifteen years after the birth of Jesus between the years ten and fifteen A.D.<sup>7</sup> His family was Jewish and traced its decent from the tribe of Benjamin. The setting in which his family lived was that of a social, cultural, and religious minority and thus was in conflict with the religious and cultural standards of the Greek people of the city.

The fact that there was a Stoic University in Tarsus and the practice of a primitive cult of the goddess Ma may also have added to the conflicts with his environmental situation. The more common aspects of life in a Hellenistic city such as the influence of the Greek language,

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<sup>7</sup>Edgar J. Goodspeed, Paul (Philadelphia: Winston, 1947), pp. 1-2.

Hellenistic art, the particular standard of people of a certain culture and the conventions of manners and institutions must have affected and conditioned Paul's life.<sup>8</sup> Under these conditions it is probable that his home environment dictated a strict observance of the Judaic traditions in order to maintain them. It was necessary to take a thorough and uncompromising negative attitude toward all un-Jewish elements.

As a Jew, he must have learned from an early age the story of his great heritage and the meaning of the Torah. From his early years, the Torah was a strong driving force leading him to strict obedience. The Torah was not only Yahweh's revelation of himself but also the revelation of his will for his people. He says of himself, "I advanced in Judaism beyond my people so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers" (Gal. 1:14). From the beginning it seems that strict adherence to the Torah did not solve Paul's internal struggle. If anything, it only increased it. "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate . . . I can will what is right, but I cannot do it." (Romans 7: 15, 18b). He continually found himself in the grip of sin,

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<sup>8</sup>Donald W. Riddle, Paul: Man of Conflict (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1940), pp. 26-27.

What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet, if it had not been for the law, I should not have known sin. I should not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, 'You shall not covet.' But sin, finding opportunity in the commandment, wrought in me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from the law sin lies dead. I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died; the very commandment which promised life proved to be death to me. (Romans 7:7-10)

Deissmann concluded that Paul could not have had a sunny, cheerful childhood. He says, "Law, Sin and Death already in early life cast their gloomy shadows in the soul of the gifted boy."<sup>9</sup> There can be little doubt that Paul had a heavy burden to bear. One who was so zealous for the Law and yet not able to fulfill it completely could not help but be torn by the internal struggle.

In psychological terms one may interpret Paul's inner struggle as despair. He was in despair because he was not able to fulfill the meaning of the Torah. Only as one fulfilled it could he be saved from sin.

C. H. Dodd says the struggle of "Ezra" best represents Paul's pre-Christian position. Ezra's questions about faith and works in relation to the mercy of God and the salvation of men (II Esdras 8:32-36) also bother Paul. Dodd goes on to say,

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<sup>9</sup>Adolf Deissmann, Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History (New York: Harper and Row, 1912), p. 93.

. . . The problem which most burdens the mind of 'Ezra' is that of the fate of the majority of the human race. On his premises--that God has promised eternal life to those who keep His commandments, and to them alone--it follows inevitably that the great bulk of humanity has been created only to perish.<sup>10</sup>

These same questions may have gone through the mind of Paul. Paul Johnson, a thinker in the field of psychology of religion, may give insight to Paul's dilemma,

. . . No person is self-sufficient or able to fulfill his need from within himself alone. He is incomplete, and to live at all he must depend upon resources beyond his own. Consequently, the very existence of man from moment to moment is a crisis.<sup>11</sup>

Donald Riddle, in discussing the problem of Paul's persecution of Christians states that it grew out of the conviction that the Torah was the only way for salvation. The fact that those who followed Jesus proclaimed a new "way" resulted in an instinctive and violent opposition. Riddle says that the sensitiveness of Paul to strive to fulfill the Torah ". . . caused him to conclude that despite his inability to realize the standard of Torah, despite his conviction that the fault lay in himself, he must strive even the harder to achieve his goal."<sup>12</sup> Committed to this belief he lashed out at those who proclaimed

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<sup>10</sup>C. H. Dodd, "The Mind of Paul: Change and Development," Bulletin of the John Rylands Library XVII (January 1934), p. 102.

<sup>11</sup>Paul E. Johnson, "Conversion," Pastoral Psychology, X (June 1959), p. 56.

<sup>12</sup>Riddle, op. cit., p. 53.

another way.

Secondly, every Jew was expected to follow a normative code of practice. The cults of Jesus in Gentile environments, however, radically deviated from the Jewish code in that, for example, Jews and Gentiles practiced common fellowship and ate together. This must have been strongly disapproved by non-Christian Jews such as Paul.<sup>13</sup>

Riddle goes on to pose the following theory for Paul's conflict--a religious person who is utterly committed to his particular pattern of belief such that he compels others to conform to his way is likely to be a sincere person to his goal.

Almost always he is guilty of rationalization: What he does is done for the great end of preserving the true faith; this justifies the pain inflicted upon the victims. But when, as in the case of Paul, the persecuting activity springs from an unusual tenderness, rather than from an extreme coarseness, the persecutor is likely to be led into further tortures of self-examination.<sup>14</sup>

This was the reason for Paul's inner conflict reaching its crisis. (Although an interesting theory, it is questionable whether this was the case.)

More likely Paul's inner conflict was the fact of his inability to fulfill the intent of the Torah. To fail

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 60.



to do so was for him to be in sin. It is more likely to conclude that this awareness of his sin was the motivating factor behind his conversion.

At this point, an investigation of some possible psychological elements in his conversion will be helpful. It is clear that Paul thought of his conversion experience as totally motivated from an external force. It was an act of God for which he had not prepared. He supports his belief by claiming that God had set him apart even before he was born (Gal. 1:15). But was this really the case?

We have previously mentioned Paul's conflicts with his conscience. He may have had deep-seated anxiety feelings--feelings of his inability to fulfill the intent of the Torah. These conflicts would most likely be on the conscious level. However, if Paul had suppressed his conflicts, it is understandable that his conversion would seem to him to be totally from without.

Today we know more about the dynamics of internal conflicts. Modern psychology tells us that we are greatly influenced by our unconscious. Jung thought that Paul's conversion was ". . . due to the eruption into consciousness of a Christian complex which developed autonomously in unconscious mind."<sup>15</sup> In this train of thought, Paul

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<sup>15</sup>G. J. Inglis, "The Problem of St. Paul's Conversion," Expository Times, XL (October 1929), 228.

unconsciously yielded to the influences of the Christian faith.

William James' understanding of the unconscious may also support Jung's theory. He says,

. . . consciousness throws open our senses to the touch of things material, so it is logically conceivable that if there be higher spiritual agencies that can directly touch us, the psychological condition of their doing so might be our possession of a subconscious region which alone should yield access to them.<sup>16</sup>

Here James seems simply to say that God confronts man through his unconscious. This is an ingenious idea.

Rather than saying, however, that the conscious or unconscious is primary in influencing an individual, it is probably more fruitful to understand that both are interacting and mutually influential.

The radicalness of Paul's conversion was evident. It came as a flash of light and consequently Paul became an ardent proclaimer of the new "way" which he had earlier rejected. The one important factor that again stands out in the experience of conversion is the consciousness of sin. Paul was most aware of his sin in failing to fulfill the Torah.

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<sup>16</sup>James, op. cit., p. 242.

### Gradual Conversion

Gradual conversion is more difficult to study because the experience is not as distinct as those of sudden conversion.

Elmer T. Clark speaks of gradual conversion as that type of experience in which the emotional upheaval is much reduced in intensity--or even entirely absent--and in which no special change is affected, but the subject looks back to some even which serves as a stimulus to awaken the religious consciousness.<sup>17</sup>

This experience may be the result of baptism, confirmation or joining the Church. In this case there is still a specific event to which one points as his experience of conversion although it is not as emotional as sudden conversion. Studies in the area of religious experience by Starbuck, James, E. T. Clark, W. H. Clark, Coe and others all verify the fact that the majority of people have conversion experiences of the gradual type.

In addition to Elmer Clark's definition, this writer believes that gradual conversion can also take place without the convert being aware of any specific event. In this case conversion takes place as a gradual process of change. The individual becomes more conscious of God and makes an effort to live in the Christian way of life.

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<sup>17</sup>Elmer T. Clark, The Psychology of Religion (New York: Macmillan, 1929), p. 43.

In order to discover the dynamics of gradual conversion it would be helpful to look at the various types and to analyze them.

William James looks at Tolstoy's experience of conversion as that of the gradual nature. He quotes the following passage from Tolstoy's writing,

Since mankind has existed, wherever life has been, there also has been the faith that gave the possibility of living. Faith is the sense of life, that sense by virtue of which man does not destroy himself, but continues to live on. It is the force whereby we live. If man did not believe that he must live for something, he would not live at all. The idea of an infinite God, of the divinity of the soul, of the union of men's action with God--these are ideas elaborated in the infinite secret depths of human thought. They are ideas without which there would be no life, without which I myself, . . . would not exist. I began to see that I had no right to rely on my individual reasoning and neglect these answers given by faith, for they are the only answers to the questions.<sup>18</sup>

It took Tolstoy two years from the beginning of his struggle to arrive at this conviction that there is a dimension to life other than the rational; other than " . . . the cerebral life, the life of conventionality, artificiality, the personal ambition."<sup>19</sup> There was the spiritual life--a life of faith in God. He came to the conclusion that "to acknowledge God and to live are one and the same

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<sup>18</sup>James, op. cit., p. 181.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

thing. God is what life is."<sup>20</sup> Here we see a man finding unity and purpose in life. He discovers that his intellectual endeavors and personal ambitions do not encompass the whole of life. Faith in God brings answers to questions not attainable through individual endeavor.

For E. Stanley Jones the consciousness of sin was the important motivating factor in conversion. One's consciousness of sin made him aware of his estrangement from God, from one's self and from life. Through conversion one was restored into relationship with God through the divine forgiveness of the Cross event.<sup>21</sup> For Jones, conversion takes place when one gives himself to God. He says,

When self-surrender takes place, God moves in from the margin and takes possession of the center. He is no longer 'marginal and vague'; He is now 'focal and dynamic'. He is 'focal'--at the center and all else is subservient to Him, and He is 'dynamic'--He no longer operates feebly upon us from the margin. He now operates dynamically--the Life of our life, the love of our love, the Being of our being, the Joy of our joy.<sup>22</sup>

Jones' approach to conversion is devotional in nature; however, he offers some good insights. He sees three stages in the process of surrendering.

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 182.

<sup>21</sup>E. Stanley Jones, Conversion (New York: Abingdon Press, 1959), p. 44.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

The first stage is the "mood". It comes as a result of frustrations, conflicts and feelings of futility. This is followed by the "movement" stage--the earnest seeking for grace through prayer and the giving of ourselves to God's mercy. God also moves to meet us. Jones says, "If we take one step, He takes two."<sup>23</sup>

The third stage is the "moment" of surrender. "It is the moment when we throw ourselves into the arms of everlasting mercy. We are His, for better or for worse, for life or for death, to sink or to swim."<sup>24</sup>

This experience of surrender is the growing conviction that Jesus is Lord--the Lord of our whole life. It is a once-and-for-all experience.<sup>25</sup> Jones is not very clear, at this point, as to what he means by once-and-for-all. For this writer, it seems to mean that one surrenders his life to God never to turn away from him again. However, this does not mean giving up all claims to one's life. Rather, it is the continual process of turning to God and participating with him as a co-author of one's life. Jones' theory of the stages of conversion suggests that conversion is a process.

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 65.

In Starbuck's study he found eight motives or forces which were involved in conversion. These were "... fears, other self-regarding motives, altruistic motives, following out a moral ideal, remorse and conviction for sin, response to teaching, example and imitation, urging and other forms of social pressures.<sup>26</sup> Of these the conviction of sin was about as prominent as the response to a moral ideal.<sup>27</sup> These two and the motivation from urging and social pressure stood out as the three prominent motives most frequently mentioned by converts. Examples of these are the following. In the remorse and conviction of sin group, Starbuck received these statements:

F., 17. 'Remorse for past conduct was my chief motive.' M., 18. 'I was thoroughly convicted of sin.' F., 14. 'My sins were very plain to me. I thought myself the greatest sinner in the world.' F., 18. 'The downfall and death of a friend I had trusted set me to thinking; I wondered if I were not worse than she.'<sup>28</sup>

It is obvious that these youth experienced an emotional conflict. It was after struggling with these feelings that he was converted. There was a gradual developmental stage in which the convert earnestly stroved to get away from sin.

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<sup>26</sup>Starbuck, op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

The second example is that of the moral ideal group.

The statements Starbuck received were

M., 14. 'I was moved by a feeling of duty.' M., 16. 'I wanted to be good and to control my anger and passions.' F., 17. 'I had an inner conviction that it was a good thing to do.' M., 15. 'I had a yearning for a higher ideal of life.' F., 13. 'It was spontaneous awakening to a divine impulse.'<sup>29</sup>

In these cases there was a positive striving toward a fulfillment of life. These youth believed that through conversion they could attain these high moral ideals.

The third group is that of urging and social pressure. Some statements received by Starbuck are the following.

M., 15. 'The girls coaxed me at school. Estimable ladies and deacons gathered around me and urged me to flee from the wrath to come.' F., 13. 'I took the course pointed out at the time.' F., 14. 'A pleading word from my teacher helped me.'<sup>30</sup>

In these cases Starbuck says ". . . imitation and social pressure are frequently so intense that the individuality of the subject is entirely lost."<sup>31</sup> Thus, conversion was most often sudden. For this reason this group will not be considered in this section on gradual conversion.

From Starbuck's finds one can conclude that in gradual conversion the elements of the conviction for sin and the following out of a moral ideal stand out as the two

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.



most important factors motivating one to conversion. For the purpose of this study only the element of conviction for sin will be discussed.

Starbuck discovered in his research that the sense of sin was greater in non-revival cases than in revival cases. He says, "This is especially noteworthy when we consider that revival methods emphasize the fact of sin and the means of escape from it."<sup>32</sup> He thought that the reason fewer people mentioned the sense of sin in a revival situation was because the social pressure in revivals carried a person over the tendency to introspect. On the other hand those in non-revival situations had more opportunity to reflect upon his predicament. The result was a greater awareness of sin.<sup>33</sup> Thus, the common charge that revivals stir the sense of sin more than other methods of evangelism is not entirely just. In Starbuck's terms, "They do not so much *awaken* these highly emotional states as *appeal to those instincts already at work in consciousness, . . .*"<sup>34</sup>

Starbuck states that the conviction of sin is expressed in many ways. For example sin was expressed as

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., pp. 54-55.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

". . . the feeling of imperfection, incompleteness, undone-ness, unworthiness, and the like."<sup>35</sup> All these expressions indicate an awareness by the individual of his failure to attain his highest potential which he views as sinful. His failure is not only a failure to himself but also a failure to God. He becomes aware of his estrangement from God. Because of the importance of sin in conversion it will be helpful to explore this concept further.

Before moving to an investigation of the concept of sin it is necessary to draw a conclusion.

In the experience of sudden conversion it was found that it was always a conscious and emotional experience in that a person could point to a specific event. In the case of a Christian conversion a person re-directed his life to a more Christian way of living. He gained new insight to the Christian faith and entered into a deeper relationship with God. For Paul, his conversion meant a new understanding of faith; he did not call his new understanding Christianity but understood it as a new understanding of his Jewish faith. He came to realize that faith in God was the essence of being religious rather than trying to fulfill the intent of the law, which he found he could not do.

In sudden conversion the individual almost always felt that the conversion was caused by an external force.

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

But although the convert thought it was external there was always an internal struggle. This internal struggle could be conscious or unconscious. In the case of a conscious internal conflict there were always strong polar forces operating. On the one hand there was a desire to will oneself to God and on the other a resistance to it. It was suggested that there were two ways of overcoming these polar forces. The first way was to overcome the force that resisted conversion. This was possible by convicting the individual for his sin and at the same time offering a new way of life. The second way was through self surrender. The individual realizing that he could not save himself from sin by himself surrenders to the power of God to save him.

In the case where the internal conflict was unconscious or subconscious the person felt that his conversion was effected by some external power. This is what Paul believed. The person who was unconscious of an internal struggle tended to believe that it was God who converted him rather than the result of any personal activity. But even in such cases there is a decision made on the part of the convert to will himself to God's activity although this decision is much reduced in value. In either case, conscious or unconscious struggle, when a person made a positive response to God, conversion took place.

In the case of gradual conversion the emotional element was much reduced. In such an experience a person could still point to a specific event although the emotional element of his experience was much less intense than in that of sudden conversion. In the example of Tolstoy's conversion, he came to realize after two years of internal struggle that faith gave answers to questions that reason could not. In his case the inner struggle was much less than that of Paul's. On the other hand gradual conversion could take place without the convert being able to point to any specific event as Bushnell suggested.

For Jones the consciousness of sin was the key motivating factor in conversion. He suggested that there were three stages in conversion. The consciousness of sin in the first stage caused one to become frustrated and feel futile. He called this the mood stage. The movement stage was the second stage in which the individual turned to God for help. Finally the moment stage was when the individual surrendered to God. Jones' study suggests that conversion is a process. Starbuck similarly found that the conviction of sin was one of the most important factors in conversion.

In both sudden and gradual conversion the process of conversion must always be thought in terms of an on-going process. This is because conversion is never totally complete. Conversion begins with the acceptance of Jesus

Christ as one's savior but goes on because there is always the need to continually enter into a deeper relationship with God. In so doing one's faith is always in the process of maturing.

The investigation of sudden and gradual conversion lifted up the concept of sin as one of the most important elements in conversion. For this reason it will be helpful to take a closer look at this concept of sin and its relationship to conversion.

## CHAPTER IV

### VIEWS OF SIN AND CONVERSION

The interpretations of conversion in the previous chapters show that the sense of sin is usually seen as one of the most important factors in the experiences of conversion. In the majority of cases, conviction of sin seemed to be a necessary element in motivating a person toward conversion. Thus, it will be helpful to take a closer look at this concept in order to understand man's predicament. For this purpose Schleiermacher and Kierkegaard are selected for special study. The approach of these men to the problem of sin and conversion presents an interesting contrast. Also, their views on the responsibility of the individual in his conversion are quite different but important.

#### Schleiermacher

A view of sin. Schleiermacher begins from the position that all men have a self-consciousness. Our self-consciousness is possible only because we have an awareness of our dependence upon God.<sup>1</sup> This means that an individual is able to become aware of his individuality only because

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<sup>1</sup>Friedrich Schleiermacher, The Christian Faith (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), p. 16.

he is aware of an Other (God). In this sense an individual is absolutely dependent upon God in order to identify himself as a being. But Schleiermacher says that it is possible to be absolutely dependent only because one also has freedom. Freedom for Schleiermacher is man's activity in determining the Other.<sup>2</sup> Thus, self-consciousness is the result of dependence and freedom. These two elements are held in unity. Also Schleiermacher concluded that self-consciousness was always to be understood in unity with God-consciousness; the two could not be separated from each other.<sup>3</sup>

For the Christian, says Schleiermacher, his God-consciousness is bound to the understanding of Jesus Christ as Redeemer.<sup>4</sup> It is in the affirmation of Jesus Christ as Redeemer that an individual becomes conscious of sin. But the consciousness of Jesus Christ as Redeemer also brings the awareness of grace. Thus, sin and grace must be viewed as the opposite sides of the same coin. In every experience with Christ the consciousness of sin and grace is illuminated.

For Schleiermacher, sin and the consciousness of sin must always be held together. It is through personal

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 261.

self-consciousness that a person becomes aware of an inner state as sin. For Schleiermacher, man is not sinful by nature. Sin, he believed, exists only when an individual is personally conscious of it.<sup>5</sup> The consciousness of sin is possible only in contrast with a consciousness of good. This consciousness of good is man's original perfection. Schleiermacher says, "Sin, . . . , manifests itself only in connexion with and by means of already existent good, and what it obstructs is future good."<sup>6</sup>

If man is not sinful by nature where then does sin originate? Schleiermacher's answer is that sin has its origin in something beyond and prior to each individual. But the fact that every person is sinful is because he chooses to posit it in his life.<sup>7</sup> Thus, for Schleiermacher, there were these two types of sin, the sin that an individual posited in his life and the sin that existed beyond and prior to individual sin.

This latter concept is understood by Schleiermacher as man's original sin. He puts it thus,

The sinfulness that is present in an individual prior to any action of his own, and has its ground outside his own being, is in every case a complete incapacity for good . . . .<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 277.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 279-80.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 282.



In this sense, original sin is the ground or foundation for actual sin. It is in later sinful acts that the element of original sin is revealed--the incapacity to do good.<sup>9</sup> (Here good is understood to be that which is determined by the God-consciousness. It is the ability to will and do that which is good, and it leads toward redemption.<sup>10</sup>)

Schleiermacher saw every individual guilt as representative of a corporate guilt. Because every individual is a member of the human race, his act of sin affects all others. There is a causal efficacy such that every individual sin is ". . . both propagated by antecedent sinfulness and propagates sinfulness."<sup>11</sup> Schleiermacher, however, is aware that the argument of causal efficacy cannot be pushed back to the original sin as suggested in the Mosaic narrative. Rather than thinking in terms of the fall of Adam as the original sin, Schleiermacher believes that the potential for sinning is present in every man. This potential is his original sin.<sup>12</sup>

On the matter of actual sin, Schleiermacher says that we are always conscious of it. He saw this as a

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 281.

<sup>10</sup>George Cross, The Theology of Schleiermacher (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1911), pp. 174-75.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 182.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 183-184.

universal necessity, for only as man is conscious of his sin will he see the need for redemption. The more God-conscious a person becomes, the more sin-conscious he gets. And in the act of redemption, man turns from evil to good. In the case of the unredeemed, sin-consciousness prevails and the actions of man are evil.<sup>13</sup>

Schleiermacher then turned his attention to the question of how man becomes conscious of his state of sin. He saw two divine attributes which relate to the consciousness of sin. These are the holiness and justice of God.

The holiness of God is the divine causality establishing the law in the corporate life of man. This law acts as our conscience. It brings to mind the inequality between our God-consciousness and our self-consciousness. Our self-conscious acts are never able to fulfill our God-conscious will. This inability is the sin of all men and their need for redemption. Schleiermacher stresses two important elements of thought in relation to the concept of the holiness of God. The first is that the holiness of God is what confronts man and reveals his state of sin. The second is only alluded to--that is holiness demands our absolute dependence upon God.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 184-186.

<sup>14</sup>Schleiermacher, op. cit., p. 344.

This second divine attribute, the justice of God, corresponds to our consciousness of the connection between actual sins and evil. The correlation is that evil is seen as the effect of universal sinfulness; and also as punishment for actual sin. Thus, the justice of God brings to consciousness man's punishment for actual sin. George Cross summarizes Schleiermacher's thoughts in the following manner, ". . . divine righteousness is the divine causality apprehended as producing in the human soul the consciousness of the desert of punishment."<sup>15</sup> This definition of God's justice, however, is only one half of the total meaning. There is also the positive aspect of the rewarding of goodness. (Thus, it also includes the connection between well-being and the power of God-consciousness.<sup>16</sup>

The justice of God, as this writer understands it, is God's willingness to allow evil to run its course. God allows man to commit evil acts and to suffer their consequences. Also if we take the idea of man belonging to the human race in the sense of an organic relationship, then the actions of one member of the race affect every other member of the race. Thus, in a sense every evil act committed is an act against oneself.

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<sup>15</sup>Cross, op. cit., p. 193.

<sup>16</sup>Schleiermacher, op. cit., p. 346.

Schleiermacher believed that the attributes of God's divine holiness and divine justice were always connected--connected in the sense of expressing the divine causality and its bearing upon sin in its relation to redemption. He says,

. . . Just as the consciousness of sin as necessarily entailing penalty--a consciousness due to the divine justice--is possible only on the assumption that conscience is due to the divine holiness of penal liability, conscience would have no means of gaining a secure hold in any human soul still under the dominion of the flesh, and thus, no means of generating there a consciousness of the need of redemption.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, it is always necessary to see the attributes of holiness and justice as being interrelated. Together, they convict man of his sin and make him desire redemption.

A view of grace. While the consciousness of sin is a personal experience, it is also related to the collective experience of all mankind. All men are conscious of sin. This is testified to by the practices of confession, offering, purification and penance in all religions. So also, in the Christian faith there is a strong emphasis on man's need for redemption.

Central to the doctrine of redemption is the understanding of Jesus Christ as Redeemer. Schleiermacher

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 351.

presents the following proposition:

In this corporate life which goes back to the influence of Jesus, redemption is effected by Him through the communication of His sinless perfection.<sup>18</sup>

The perfection of Jesus arouses in man the consciousness of sin and the longing for redemption.<sup>19</sup> Schleiermacher believed this image of perfection could be experienced first in the picture of Christ that the community of believers held. It could also be experienced through various manifestations of the original perfection.<sup>20</sup> In Jesus one can witness the perfection of his God-consciousness. Jesus' life exemplified a life fully lived in the consciousness of God. His words and deeds revealed God's love and concern for men. Through him the redemptive activity of God is made available to all men. We are forgiven for our sins and offered a new life in the grace of God.

Cross described Jesus' redeeming activity as,

. . . the implanting of the governing God-consciousness, in the propagation of the creative divine activity, as a new principle of life, in the whole of human nature, and all the energies of human nature become the organs for the propagation of the God-consciousness in those who come into spiritual contact with the communion in which that consciousness is operating, i. e., with the new organism which Christ has formed for himself.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 361.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 363.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 364.

<sup>21</sup>Cross, op. cit., p. 215.

Schleiermacher concludes that when man manifests something of the quality of Jesus' perfection, his act affirms Jesus' redemptive function.

Cross puts it in these terms,

. . . Christ, by virtue of that absolutely powerful God-consciousness which is his original endowment, enters with creative power into the course of human history to stimulate human nature to a perfect consciousness of its sinfulness and to an assimilation of his own perfection.<sup>22</sup>

The divine grace of God was experienced by man through the person and activity of Jesus. In him one sees historically an absolute realization of God-consciousness in man. In Jesus, then, God was present and through him, revealed to man. Secondly, the activity of Jesus can be best summarized as the expression and impartation of his God-consciousness to man.

Schleiermacher saw conversion as a part of the regenerative process. Regeneration is the way in which a person is assumed into a living fellowship with Christ from a corporate life of sinfulness. It is the turning point from which onward the new life is a condition of becoming.

There were two elements in regeneration which Schleiermacher believed must always be held together. The first he called justification which deals with the changed

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 199.

relationship of man to God. It assumes that ". . . something has happened to a man between his former and his present state by which the divine displeasure has been removed and without which he could not have become the object of divine favour."<sup>23</sup> The second, conversion, deals with the changed form of life in a person. It is the complete turning around and redirection of life--a new beginning of a new page.<sup>24</sup>

Schleiermacher formulated the concept of conversion in the following theorem:

Conversion, the beginning of the new life in fellowship with Christ, makes itself known in each individual by Repentance, which consists in the combination of regret and change of heart; and by faith, which consists in the appropriation of the perfection and blessedness of Christ.<sup>25</sup>

The painful recognition of sin and turning away is what Schleiermacher calls regret. For Schleiermacher the concept of regret is related to the retention and consciousness of the general condition of sin. It is present in every moment of life and witnesses to the disturbance and obstruction of life proper. It is the gnawing awareness of a fragmented existence. The reflection of this fragmented life is most vividly seen in the perfection of Christ. In

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<sup>23</sup>Schleiermacher, op. cit., p. 480.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 480-481.

the very act of convicting man of his sin, Christ offers an alternative mode of existence. It is this new hope that makes possible a change of heart.<sup>26</sup> Change of heart in a person is the act of turning to God and the good. (In this case, faith preceded the turning toward God.<sup>27</sup>)

Faith in relation to conversion is ". . . the inward condition of one who feels content and strong in fellowship with Christ."<sup>28</sup>

Schleiermacher saw this interaction also in terms of desire. There is the desire to move away from a sinful life and to receive the impulses that come from Christ. This desire, which acts in two directions, ". . . is the change of heart effected by Christ which binds regret and faith together and represents the true unity of conversion."<sup>29</sup>

There is a stage before one is fully converted which Schleiermacher spoke of as preparatory grace. It is this grace that effects various sorts of regret. These feelings of regret may show genuine pain at the state of sinfulness but ". . . they do not develop into a continuous inward movement amounting to the dawn of living faith."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 484.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 481.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 483.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 485.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.



In a similar way there are degrees of a change of heart. Schleiermacher believed that one could have such a change before it was permanently bound up in conversion.<sup>31</sup> These sorts of regret and change of heart could be related to one another and still be preparatory in character. Genuine conversion takes place only when there is a union of regret, change of heart and faith. Only then is the perfect and effective divine grace fully seen. Because there are these preparatory experiences Schleiermacher was cautious about looking for any particular mark as the sign of genuine conversion. To do so would be an arbitrary and presumptuous restriction of divine grace. He believed that only gradually could each person become certain of his experience and be assured of peace of heart. One is assured of his conversion by the fruits it bears. Schleiermacher says, ". . . it is scarcely thinkable that a man should be received into unity of life with Christ without very soon actively proving himself an instrument of his redeeming activity."<sup>32</sup>

He goes on to say,

When therefore the Redeemer calls the decisive working of divine grace a new birth, we must take part of the meaning to be that just as in the natural

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 486.

life birth is not the absolute beginning, so here a period of hidden life precedes it, and at first even the newly-born life remains unconscious, only gradually learning to know itself as a real personality in a new world.<sup>33</sup>

Schleiermacher rejected the idea that the conversion experience had to be unduly emotional. He said,

. . . the true change of heart, . . . need by no means invariably spring from a flood of regret that almost wrecks the whole being by its painful emotion.<sup>34</sup>

Capacity for emotion varies from person to person. What is very emotionally exciting to one may not be to another. There are even variations of emotional excitability within the same person. Even after a great positive emotional experience there can be a relapse into a state of futility and uncertainty. The steadfastness of the soul comes gradually.

Another commonly-held concept of conversion is the idea of its being necessary to feel great pain. This too Schleiermacher opposes. He says, ". . . Even in perfect regret no great pain need be felt."<sup>35</sup> In experiencing the blessedness of participation in fellowship with Christ, the great outpouring joy overcomes any feeling of sorrow.

Schleiermacher held that all men were candidates for conversion. Whether one is a Christian or not, if sin

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 487.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 488.

shows its power in him he needs conversion. In the case of a Christian the gospel call is present to him from infancy by virtue of his standing in the natural and orderly relation to the working of divine grace. For one who isn't Christian it is a matter of chance--how and when the gospel call reaches his ears. In either case there is the natural sequence of preparatory and quickening grace.<sup>36</sup> The church's practice of infant baptism was for Schleiermacher only the beginning of the divine work of grace. He agrees with Calvin that baptism is the ". . . seed of repentance and faith."<sup>37</sup>

For him, the key to conversion is the Word. It is its power that effects conversion and is the cause of faith. Just as the early disciples were converted by the Word of Jesus so today we are converted by the self-revelation of Christ in the preaching of that Word. In Schleiermacher's words:

The influence of Christ . . . consists solely in the human communication of the Word in so far as that communication embodies Christ's word and continues the indwelling divine power of Christ Himself.<sup>38</sup>

In this sense one can say that the life of Jesus as the

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 489.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 490.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 492.

Christ is a language event. In the proclamation of the Word Christ is realized as immediately present in His redeeming and atoning activity.

This brings us to the final question of man's responsibility in relation to God's activity in the Word. Schleiermacher believed that man has the freedom to apprehend the Word. What happens after it has made an impression on the soul, however, belongs only to the work of divine grace.<sup>39</sup> In the conversion process then, Christ is the active agent that converts while man is the receptive responder. Once conversion has taken place, though, one moves from passiveness to activeness. By the fact that one participates in the fellowship of Christ in conversion one participates in the constant activity of Christ. Schleiermacher saw a parallel between the beginning of the divine life in us and the incarnation of Jesus as the Redeemer. He says,

In Him the passivity of His human nature in that moment was just such a lively susceptibility to an absolutely powerful consciousness of God, accompanied by a desire to be thus seized and determined, which became changed through the creative act into a spontaneous activity constituting a personality. In the same way our desire is heightened in conversion by the self-communication of Christ till it becomes a spontaneous activity of the self that constitutes a coherent new life.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., pp. 493-494. <sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 495.

Before closing this discussion it is necessary to look briefly at the term justification. In Schleiermacher's thinking, it is the other half of conversion. Justification means a change in the relationship between man and God. There are two elements that make up justification--forgiveness of sin and adoption as a child of God. Through the initiative of God, Jesus Christ (as the Redeemer) took away the sin of men, making them children of God. The key, however, was faith. Through faith alone one was justified and thus now stood in a new relationship with God.

In summarizing Schleiermacher's position the following points stand out. First, the most fundamental position is the total dependence of man upon God. This recognition is the starting point of man in his attempt to understand his relationship with God.

Secondly, through the creative activity of the divine power, faith is instilled in the individual. Through Jesus Christ God confronts and convicts a person for his sins. But at the same time the hope for the forgiveness of sins and a new life in grace is offered. In this encounter with Christ man had the responsibility of apprehending the Word of God. When an individual, through the proclamation of the Word, accepted Christ as his Savior conversion took place. The process of conversion is what Schleiermacher called regeneration--the process by which a person is

assumed into a living fellowship with Christ from a corporate life of sinfulness.

### Kierkegaard

A view of sin. In one of his earlier writings, entitled The Concept of Dread,<sup>41</sup> Kierkegaard presents a psychological deliberation on the doctrine of original sin. Here he presents to us insights into his own struggle with the dread of evil toward faith.

Kierkegaard concluded that there was no logical explanation for the entrance of sin into the world. Sin for him was in the realm of the transcendent.<sup>42</sup> Thus, rather than trying to explain its entrance, he assumed it.

Beginning from this position, he affirmed that the important factor is man's freedom to choose. There is the freedom to choose between one's potential Self (spirit) and his human self. His awareness of the reality of his freedom is man's state of dread. He stands in dread in the face of possibility.<sup>43</sup>

Despair is the state of being in which one fails to achieve either. Thus, despair is "not willing to be one's

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<sup>41</sup>Søren Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946).

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

Self" results in "the sickness unto death."<sup>44</sup>

Because of man's freedom he is guilty for his own sin. Of this Kierkegaard says, "With the first sin came sin into the world. Exactly in the same way is this true of every subsequent first sin of man, that with it sin comes into the world."<sup>45</sup> Every man has the potential for sinning, and if he should sin, it is because of his own choosing.

This method of argument could also be applied to the concept of lost innocence. Kierkegaard claims that,

As Adam lost innocence by guilt, so does every man lose it. If it was not by guilt he lost it, neither was it innocence he lost; and if he was not innocent before he became guilty, he never became guilty.<sup>46</sup>

This understanding is similar to that of Schleiermacher who also held that one became guilty of sin when he posited it in his life. Kierkegaard and Schleiermacher also saw a collective consequence of sin. Man as a member of his race is affected by the sin of its individual members. This collective sin now becomes a powerful force impinging upon every member; and those being born into the race come to presuppose this sinfulness into their individual lives.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Søren Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), pp. 17-19.

<sup>45</sup>Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread, p. 28.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 32.      <sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

Kierkegaard understood dread to be present in the strictest sense only when the individual himself assumed sin. However, it is also obscurely present in the quantitative history of the race.<sup>48</sup> This means that because individuals are guilty of sin the consequences of sin are present in the world and effect each generation. Each person witnesses sin as present in the world and comes to accept it as a fact of life. This is what Kierkegaard means by a qualitative leap. He said that, ". . . the individual posits sin by the qualitative leap; and the dread which entered in along with sin, and which for this reason comes also into the world quantitatively every time an individual posits sin."<sup>49</sup> For Kierkegaard the dread of sin is the anxiety one feels of committing sin at any moment.

Kierkegaard went further to distinguish two kinds of dread. The first, objective dread, is the anxious longing of creation from its state of imperfection. This involves the longing of only the non-human sphere of being. In other words objective dread is the awareness of the sinfulness of the whole world which is propagated by each generation.<sup>50</sup> The second, subjective dread, is the longing experienced by the individual. It is posited in the individual as the

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., pp. 50-53.



consequence of his sin. Kierkegaard likens it to a state of dizziness. It is the dizziness of freedom occurring when the spirit of man (Self) looks down into the abyss of possibility. Freedom reaches out to grasp at finiteness, to sustain itself, but succumbs and falls into guilt.<sup>51</sup> Man becomes aware of his state of sin or of the possibility of committing such when he is confronted by what could be for him--his highest potential. This potential is always measured against the personality of Jesus Christ. When aware of his state of sin man stands, as it were, in a state of non-being--the state of not being willing to be one's Self. This is not accidental but a result of his own doing or failure of doing. Thus ". . . dread the state out of which a man longs to be delivered announces itself and it announces itself because longing alone is not enough to save man."<sup>52</sup>

Another characteristic of dread is the fact that it is always in reference to the future. It results from uncertainty about things to come. Kierkegaard says, "For freedom the possible is the future; and for time the future is the possible."<sup>53</sup> Dread corresponds to both these possibilities in the individual life. Even when one is said to

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., pp. 54-55.      <sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 82.

be in dread of the past, it is because the past stands in a relation to possibility. In other words, one is in dread because of the possibility of re-occurrence.<sup>54</sup>

Kierkegaard saw three elements in close relationship to dread--spirit, fate and guilt.

Dread in relation to the default of the spirit means the failure of a person to choose his Self (spirit). Only when one chooses his Self will he bring meaning into his life. If he doesn't, he exists in sin or is spirit-less. Kierkegaard likens this spirit-lessness to a meaningless murmur. He says, ". . . It is comical that a sum of rational creatures are transformed into a perpetual murmur without meaning."<sup>55</sup> To be in a spirit-less life is the most terrible thing of all. It is going through the motion of life as a talking machine. It is like an egg with its yoke blown out. The tragedy of this life is that it does not realize its hollowness. Kierkegaard says, "In spirit-lessness there is no dread. It is too happy and content for that, and too spirit-less."<sup>56</sup> Dread is present, but under disguise and therefore not recognized.

For Kierkegaard fate is the unity of necessity and

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 85.

chance. He says fate is blind, "for that which walks forward blindly walks just as much by necessity as by chance."<sup>57</sup> Fate's relationship to dread is that it " . . . is the nothing of dread."<sup>58</sup>

This concept is difficult for this writer to comprehend. In his thinking fate is the great unknown. It is the uncertainty existing between that which is necessary and that which comes by chance. Similarly, he thinks dread is the uncertainty of the future--uncertainty in the face of possibilities. With this interpretation then, it is possible to understand how fate is the nothing of dread. The effect of this close relationship is that fate disappears when dread does with the choosing of a Self. Conversely, when one's fate is determined, possibility at that moment no longer exists and dread disappears.

The relationship of dread to guilt is an important one. Kierkegaard began from the position that if a finite spirit was to see God it must begin by being guilty. Thus he says the religious genius turns towards himself and in so doing discovers guilt and freedom--the freedom of knowing that he can choose. However, "in the degree that he discovers freedom, in that same degree does the dread of

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

guilt in the condition of possibility impend over him."<sup>59</sup> Guilt is what the genius most fears because ". . . that is the one and only thing that can deprive him of freedom."<sup>60</sup> Dread, then, is freedom's relation to guilt in the realm of possibility.

As originally stated, sin for Kierkegaard presupposes itself, just as freedom does, and cannot be explained by any antecedent. Kierkegaard held that "when sin is posited in the particular individual by the qualitative leap, the distinction is then posited between good and evil."<sup>61</sup> Thus a person who continually stands in a state of possibility for good or evil is in continual dread.

The dread of evil results as a condition of posited sin. When sin is posited the possibility of sinking even deeper into sin is the dread of evil. This possibility is the object of dread. Here dread is thrown into remorse. Remorse sorrows over sin and interprets the consequence of sin as penal suffering and perdition.<sup>62</sup> Though this chain of events paints a bleak picture, Kierkegaard saw a way of breaking out. He says,

The one and only thing which is able to disarm the sophistry of remorse is faith, courage to believe that the state of sin is itself a new sin, courage to

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., pp. 101-103.

renounce dread without any dread, which only faith is capable of--not that it annihilates dread, but remaining ever young, it is continually developing itself out of the death throes of dread. Only faith is capable of doing this, for only in faith is the synthesis eternally and every instant possible.<sup>63</sup>

Faith therefore is the key to the Christian life. It opens the door to creativity and authenticity.

At this point a brief look at the concept of "the dread of the good" will be helpful. The dread of good means that when one is in the state of sin he is unfree to relate to the good. Good reveals an individual's state of sin--what Kierkegaard calls the demoniacal character of the sinner. As such the sinner is in dread of the good because the good reveals the very thing he does not wish to see, his sinfulness. Good here, signifies the reintegration of freedom, redemption and salvation.<sup>64</sup> Out of this demoniacal state sinful acts break forth perpetually.

A view of salvation. Kierkegaard saw great value in dread because it could become a saving experience through faith. Dread was understood as a product of man. It was his created fear of the unknown future--the future holding all the dimensions and element of an individual's possibilities, even the possibility of freedom from sin.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., pp. 139-140.

Thus dread serves to educate man to the possibility of salvation.

For Kierkegaard, Jesus Christ made it possible for us to be converted and saved from sin. Christ was the Savior and Redeemer who saved man from the state of sin into which he had plunged himself.<sup>66</sup> The result of Jesus' activity is New Birth. Kierkegaard says, "When one who has experienced birth thinks of himself as born, he conceives this transition from non-being to being."<sup>67</sup> He wills to choose his Self and in so doing overcomes dread.

In Jesus, God took the form of a humble servant in order to bring a union between man and God.<sup>68</sup> This act revealed God's omnipotent love for man.

He became wholly man in Jesus Christ in order to show man's unlikeness (state of sin). In Jesus he became the perfect man for all to see their deviation from perfection. Through their own guilt of sin they have gone astray and now Jesus Christ comes into the world to make them conscious of their sins. This is what Kierkegaard

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<sup>66</sup>Søren Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1936, 1962), p. 21.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

calls the Absolute Paradox. Negatively it reveals the absolute unlikeness of sin, and positively it proposes to do away with the absolute unlikeness in absolute likeness.<sup>69</sup> This process is the positing of the Moment. The Moment convicts the individual of his sin. The individual receives the consciousness of sin and is bewildered with respect to himself. Kierkegaard says that everything hinges on this Moment.<sup>70</sup>

In the Moment Jesus Christ confronts the individual in perfection and makes him conscious of his state of sin. Christ establishes the condition for Faith, the ability to understand the Eternal. The individual is convicted for his sins and repents. He is asked to accept by Faith that Jesus Christ is God and Savior. When Jesus Christ is accepted as his Savior, he also accepts the eternal Truth that Jesus died on the Cross for his (the individual's) sins and the sins of all men. The sins of men are forgiven to all who will believe in Faith.<sup>71</sup>

This phenomena was for Kierkegaard the process of conversion. The change is the process of "the coming-into-existence."<sup>72</sup> One is changed from a state of non-being

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid., pp. 58-59.      <sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., pp. 77-81.      <sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 90.

(estrangement from God) to a state of being (relationship with God). Kierkegaard says ". . . the change of coming into existence is a transition from possibility to actuality."<sup>73</sup> This means that which stood before an individual as his possibility (highest potentiality) is now actualized. There is a qualitative change in the personality of the individual.<sup>74</sup>

In summarizing Kierkegaard's position it is correct to say sin is presupposed in the potentiality of every man to sin. When an individual posits sin, it enters his life. The greatest sin a man commits is the failure to choose his Self. He binds himself to the finite world and to life in constant dread of possibility. On the other hand, if he has the courage to choose his Self all things are possible. Possibility raises dread--but dread is transformed into a saving experience. It convicts man of his absolute state of sin, but at the same time instills faith. Through faith dread is overcome.

#### An Attempt at Synthesis

In an attempt to formulate some principles to deal with the problem of sin and conversion, it is essential that some synthesis be formed from the positions of Schleiermacher and Kierkegaard. Two approaches will be used.

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., pp. 235-36.



First, the similarities in the two positions will be discussed, then the differences.

Points of similarity. Schleiermacher and Kierkegaard both presupposed God in their systems of thought. For Schleiermacher God is present to every man in his self-consciousness which stems from his God-consciousness. This consciousness reveals two characteristics. First, the holiness of God showing man's finitude in comparison with God's infinity. Second, the justice of God, allowing evil to run its course. The effects of evil are seen by the sinner as punishment. The result of an individual's self-consciousness is the conviction of sin.

In a similar manner Kierkegaard presents his concept of self-consciousness as possibility. It is possibility which reveals to an individual the characteristics of infinity and finitude. There is the freedom to choose, or not to choose, one's Self (spirit). To choose the Self is to enter into the realm of the spirit-(infinity). Failure to do so keeps a person in finitude and sin. The possibility of choosing the Self results in dread.

Another point of similarity is seen in the men's positions on the activity of God's Grace. For Schleiermacher the activity of grace is man's assurance that he can depend totally on God. Through dependence on the redeeming activity of Jesus Christ faith is instilled in man. In him

the faithful sees an image of perfection and through him the unity between God and man is established. Thus we can begin to posit in our lives something of the image of Christ. Through the union with God a new mode of life is opened to man--a life in the grace of God.

Similarly Kierkegaard saw the necessity of man's total dependence in God. He described this dependence as man's leap of faith. In the leap faith is instilled. Man accepts his freedom of possibility, and in so doing overcomes his dread. It no longer imprisons him in the fear of sin. Through faith a new mode of existence is opened. Here, as opposed to Schleiermacher's state of being, one is in the process of becoming.

Points of difference. Though Schleiermacher and Kierkegaard begin from the position that God is the initiator of Grace and Redemption, here the similarity ends. For Schleiermacher, God initiates and completes the process of regeneration. Man's only activity is to apprehend the Word. Kierkegaard on the other hand places more responsibility on man. He views man as always in the process of becoming and therefore sees the necessity of his cooperation in the activity of God. Man always stands in a relationship of dependence on God but, within this relationship, has the freedom to choose his Self. This freedom is the essence of his existence. Thus Kierkegaard says that one does not

fall into despair or dread but chooses it voluntarily. Because of this freedom an individual has the will to cooperate with God in order to receive his salvation. He cooperates with God by continually choosing the Self.

Another point of difference is in Schleiermacher's and Kierkegaard's concept of sin. Both men believed that all are guilty. For Schleiermacher this is so because man is born into a sinful world and because he accepts sin as part of his nature even before committing one. A wrong doing later (actual sin) is only the latent manifestation of what he believed to be his sinful nature (original sin). Kierkegaard, on the other hand, believed that an individual becomes sinful only when he posits sin. He has the potential to do so but is not guilty until he does. Thus the awareness of one's state of sin is a result of his own doing. Dread is the result of this act and the fear of its recurrence. For Schleiermacher, this awareness is the result of man's sinful nature.

Possible approaches to sin and conversion. From the previous discussion this writer sees the following possible approaches to the problem of sin and conversion.

The starting point is the recognition of one's state of sin. The question of its origin is not relevant to a discussion of the process of conversion. Rather the existential approach of accepting the fact of its presence is

sufficient. It can be assumed that every person has an inherent awareness of sin. Schleiermacher and Kierkegaard discussed this concept of becoming aware of sin in terms of Jesus Christ. It is he who convicts man of his sin.

Another starting point related to the recognition of sin is that of acknowledging God's activity in the forgiving of sins and the conversion of persons. His initiative is most clearly exemplified in the activity of Jesus Christ. Man now has the possibility of overcoming his state of sin. Responses to God's activity have varied. Central to the response, however, is the recognition that one cannot save himself from a state of sin. It requires Faith. The differences between our responses to God's activity are determined by our individual understanding of our responsibilities. For Schleiermacher, man's job is only to apprehend the Word of God. For Kierkegaard it is much more--man has to cooperate with God in order for his activity to be effective. This writer would stand with Kierkegaard on this point.

Conversion should also be understood as an on-going process. For Schleiermacher it is being in a state of grace. It does not, however, stop there. Here Kierkegaard's understanding of the process of becoming is most helpful. There is the continual process of choosing the Self and the positing of something of the character of

Jesus Christ in our activity. Then we experience the mode of the new life.

## CHAPTER V

### PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF THIS STUDY

#### Ministering to the Nisei in Hawaii

In this chapter an attempt will be made to apply some of the findings of this study in ministering to the Nisei in Hawaii. The predicament of the Nisei is an interesting and complex one. This writer, being a Nisei himself, feels a certain sensitivity to the inner religious and psychological struggles of this group of people. Thus there is a special interest in ministering to them.

A historical development. The missionary movement in Hawaii was started by a handful of brave Protestant missionaries from New England. After many long months and sailing around Cape Horn they finally arrived in April of 1820. These first missionaries encountered many difficulties. There was a whole new way of life adjust to. They were required to live in grass huts and to try to win the confidence of a suspicious king. Struggling on with steadfast courage, they found the response of the natives to the Christian gospel very favorable and the conversion of these relatively simple people rapid.

During the period of the Great Awakening (1836 to 1838) many were converted. A missionary reporting on the event said,

The word seemed to fall on the hearts of sinners like the hammer and the fire of the Almighty. Many wept and many trembled . . . Many came from the distance of 50 and 60 miles to hear the gospel. It was a season of deep and solemn interest. God's word was with power, and his work was glorious. Multitudes wept and trembled, and hundreds evidently think they are converted.<sup>1</sup>

Though these revival meetings also resulted in many back-slides, with frequent reactions to missionary values, Christianity had made its mark. In fact its general tide was so great and rapid that by 1841 Hawaii was considered to be "Christianized." By 1884 Christianity seemed to have reached all aspects of existence, such that Rufus Anderson, then Secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, wrote:

The constitution, laws, institutions, and religious professions were as decidedly Christian as in any of the older nations of Christendom. There were no other acknowledged religions, no other acknowledged worship. They had the Sabbath, Christian churches, and a Christian ministry; and their literature, so far as they had any, was almost wholly Christian. Their's were some of the largest churches in the world, and as great a proportion of the people attending the Sabbath worship, as in any Christian nation.<sup>2</sup>

It was in this kind of environment that the first Japanese immigrants found themselves. Their arrival as plantation laborers began in 1868. Upon arrival, they were taken

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<sup>1</sup>Bernhard L. Hormann (ed.), Community Forces in Hawaii (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1956), p. 155.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

immediately to the various plantations and put to work at long hard hours. (26 days a month; 6:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.; 30 minutes for lunch.) For their efforts they received \$4.00 per month, besides food, lodging and medical expenses.<sup>3</sup> Though the work was hard, the hope of starting new lives and making money called many others to the islands. Between 1885 and 1894, 29,032 Japanese came to Hawaii. The number kept increasing such that between 1894 and 1900 a total of 40,208 arrived. 68,326 more sailed over during the period of free immigration from 1900 to 1908.<sup>4</sup> Of this latter group, one third made their way to California and by 1905 there were approximately 51,000 on the Pacific coast. The earlier immigrants were only men but now women and children also came. Most of the women came as picture brides. Of the 62,277 immigrating between 1908 and 1924, 26,503 were men, 30,633 women and 5,151 children.

As these people came they brought with them their culture and religion. These they found were not in harmony with that existing in Hawaii. Thus they tended to form their own ghettos in order to preserve their way of life. Within these confines their practices continued without too much difficulty. Their children, however, were exposed to

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 124.



American culture in school. They were expected to follow standards set there and soon found themselves torn between two cultures.

Some psychological problems. Needless to say, the Issei (first generation) had a strong feeling of loyalty and obligation to their homeland. It was all-important not to disgrace their ancestral country. Thus they especially felt the necessity to rear their children in the old-country tradition. This desire was also encouraged by the social distance between these immigrants and the finer type of American culture. There was no opportunity to learn about its home and spiritual tradition. All they knew of the culture was gained from the plantations, streets, beaches, workshops, stores and theaters. There was nothing to correspond to the sense of filial piety, loyalty, reverence, obedience to one's elders, perseverance, humility, courtesy, a sense of duty, and so forth. Hence the Issei sought the moral conservation of their children as well as themselves in the culture of their old country. There was a conscious effort keep themselves and their children from becoming Americanized.

For the Nisei, the attempt to make them Japanese in the traditional way only resulted in resistance. A sense of loyalty to a country most had never seen was asking too much. Yet there was a real desire to be obedient to their

parents. Here, in the story of a young Nisei, is illustrated the psychological struggles he faced.

Hideo-san is the eldest son of a plantation laborer. At the age of twenty-three he too works on a plantation and his obedience is very clearly illustrated in the following words,

Really, my father and mother are very old-fashioned . . . Everything is obedience--the idea of *oya-koko* (filial piety). Father is the head, and we must obey him, right or wrong. Sometimes I do get mad, but I always give in, usually because mother begs me to and other times because I just can't help it. It's just like a habit. I want more freedom, more chance to do what I want and to think on my own. I hate to do things by asking his permission, but still I do it.<sup>5</sup>

It is obvious that Hideo's father had absolute authority and the last word in all family affairs. Yet in school Hideo was encouraged to think on his own.

He wanted to go away to explore and experience new things but now his parents were old and needed his help in raising the rest of his brothers and sisters. He was aware of how much they had slaved in the hot cane fields without much to show for it. "We are their only hope. I hate to fail them even if I have to work here all my life."<sup>6</sup>

Hideo had been an outstanding student in high school and wanted to continue on to the university. But again, as

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

the eldest son, it was his duty to forego his own desires and help at home. The whole attitude of the Japanese culture held that the eldest son was obligated to the family beyond any personal desires. He reported,

Do you know, but the whole camp was concerned about it? They knew I had made pretty good in school. They even praised me for my school work, but shook their heads about my going to the university. They said, 'Your parents have done splendidly in rearing you and now it is your turn to be dutiful and help them in their old age.' Of course I gave in. My life was not my own. I had obligations to my family.<sup>7</sup>

Thus there are cries of despair. Here is shown the conflict challenging Hideo's generation. The American spirit has manifested in him the desire to better his condition but the home situation, the strong family ties, the old customs and traditions have weighed him down.

Some religious problems. Almost all of the Nisei have parents with a Buddhist background. For them Buddhism met their religious needs at the point of their initial disorganization. It gave them an inner comfort by teaching them to abandon self-pity and dissatisfaction and to establish in them a new and peaceful state of mind. They looked forward to salvation in the life after death. The present world was only an illusion where one had to learn to bear

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 148.

suffering. It was the preparatory stage to the real world hereafter.

For the Nisei such a position was difficult to accept. There was a gnawing quest for something more in this life. It could not only mean suffering. There was a certain urgency about making the best of it and they wanted the opportunity to do so on their own. From an early age, however, their parents had taught them religious stories of honesty, patience, peace, or respecting of elders. The everlasting obligation of children to their parents was impressed on them. Thus all through life they were continually under the traditions of Buddhism even when it was no longer meaningful to them.

A young girl telling of her experiences at home reports,

Certain religious days call for special rituals. In our small family shrine, we have three small wooden sticks with the names of my three dead sisters. This morning is the day on which the younger of the three died. Mother said, 'Today you must light some *sen ko* (incense) for Yae-san and pray for her.' I obediently did as she said. I stood in front of the *hotoke sama* and put the palms of my hands together. I lighted two sticks of incense and said, '*na mu amida butsu*,'<sup>8</sup> three times to myself. I don't understand the meaning

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<sup>8</sup>This chant means "Adoration to Amida Buddha." In the Honganji sect it is believed that one could attain salvation by reciting this chant. In the above, it is the hope that through these prayers the dead sister may reach Nirvana.

of the words, but I know that everybody says them. Today we will eat no meat or fish but only tofu, vegetables, and rice.<sup>9</sup>

Failure to observe these practices created a deep sense of guilt.

A young college student talking about religion in her family said that prayer was a regular part of her family life. Every evening before going to bed her family gathered for prayer. As was the custom a small gong was rung on the altar to call the members together. She says,

Then father sits at the head of the group before the altar and leads the family in prayers. The prayers are difficult and we children do not understand anything we are saying. However, we have been saying them since we were very young, even before we started for school. Everyone in our family knows them so well that we can say them without even thinking.<sup>10</sup>

It is no wonder that most Nisei felt Buddhism did not meet their needs. They had been observing its practices only out of respect and obedience. Many discontinued these observances once they left home and even stopped attending the temple on Sunday. The only time they stepped within its walls was for funerals. Thus Buddhism was referred to as a religion for the dead.

The situation today for most Nisei is that, with the

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<sup>9</sup>Hormann, op. cit., p. 266.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 261.

death of their Issei parents, they do not feel anymore so great a pressure. Yet there is still a strong sense of honoring their departed parents especially when special festival days like *O-bon* (festival of the return of the dead) come around. On these days they carry on the old Buddhist tradition of decorating the tombs and offering food to the spirits.

Does Christianity have anything to offer these people? If so what and how can it be presented in an understandable manner?

An approach to the Nisei's problem. Most Nisei are aware of the hollowness in the spiritual dimension of their lives. They cannot find satisfactory meaning in Buddhism and yet they feel hesitant about accepting Christianity because of their sense of obligation. Therefore, as a minister, this writer must find a means of overcoming this barrier. The Christian position of honoring one's parents (Mark 10:19) could be a possible starting point. In this passage in Mark a similar parallel can be found to the Buddhist concept of filial piety and virtue. Such an approach would assure that Christianity too has many of the high ethical qualities of Buddhism. If such is the case, however, why change since the two seem so similar. Here then we must begin to be more resourceful.

Buddhism does not have a concept of God but it does have a consciousness of the divine. Gautama Buddha for example is held to be a divine teacher who showed the way to *Nirvana*. Thus, the Christian understanding of Jesus Christ as Savior is a likely point for dialogue. Whereas Buddha could not be relied upon for one's salvation because salvation is dependent upon one's deeds, Protestant Christianity has a totally new message--the message of salvation by faith. God initiates the act of salvation in Jesus as the Christ. This concept of a loving God initiating the act of salvation is totally new to Buddhism in Hawaii.

One can also confront the Buddhist position of life as suffering. There is emphasis on the life after death rather than on the present. This life was to be accepted humbly and suffering was to be endured patiently. The Protestant Christianity, of which this writer is a product, emphasized the present life as the important one. A person was to make the best of this life by striving to fulfill his highest potential through his daily existence. This attitude of seeking for better things in life would be very appealing. Here Kierkegaard's concept of possibility is most applicable.

For him an individual has the freedom to strive towards his possibilities. It is our freedom to choose ourselves and this is what the Nisei wants. He must be led to

understand that to resist or fail to choose oneself is the greatest sin. He must be taught that it is his responsibility to make something of his life.

The concept of sin however would not be understood, nor the concept of the sinful nature of man. Thus sin would have to be interpreted in terms of good and evil. The Nisei understands that evil is a result of his own actions--a result of his evil deeds. Thus Kierkegaard's understanding of sin becoming conscious to man when he posits sin, is helpful in understanding the Nisei's position. Assuming that all men are guilty of evil and have always in some measure failed to do the good, this writer could approach him at the point of consciousness of his evil deeds.

The confrontation, however, must always be done in the spirit of love. For love is the essence of Christianity. The hope of a new life is offered--a life posited in a faith in Jesus Christ. Here Jesus Christ may be held up for the Nisei as the example of a life full of meaning, purpose and love. A life lived in concern and good will toward one another.

It must also be made clear that though this new life is offered to each person, the individual must make the final decision. In accepting God's will one takes upon himself the challenge to work as a co-author with God in molding his life.



On a more personal level it is the task of this writer to accept the responsibility for positing something of the dynamic character of Jesus in his own life and to show this faith through his daily living. Only in so doing can he witness to the Christian life and its difference from any other existence.

As responsible Christians we must also be sensitive and responsive to others. It means a willingness to enter into the problems of the Nisei and to help them find solutions.

Finally when there is a decision to accept the Christian faith, it is the responsibility of this writer to help sustain it through a continuing proclamation of the gospel and witnessing to his faith. Even when there is a negative response, the door must be left open for future dialogue.

### Conclusion

It would be helpful to look back at our original concept of conversion to see how it has applied to the findings of this study. It would also be helpful to review the purposes of this paper and to address the concluding remarks to them.

Conversion was originally defined as a sudden or gradual process. It was discovered that the reason for

sudden conversion was due to an inner conflict and emotional crisis within an individual. These elements tended to bring a person to a peak experience which often resulted in notable changes in his personality. However, even in such experiences there could be a continual process of change. On the other hand, gradual conversion was the result of a rational working out of a problem. In these experiences, emotional excitement was not necessary.

The second element in the definition was the acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior. This came as a result of the realization of one's state of sin and awareness that he could not attain his own salvation. It required a yielding of the self--a surrendering to Christ and the acceptance of him as Savior.

The third element was the realization that no sudden or radical change in personality was necessary. There would be a change but it would come from a continual re-evaluation of one's life and actions. As such, it would be a gradual process. Even when there is a dramatic conversion and a recognizable change it is never complete. There is always the process of striving toward a meaningful and productive Christian life. In this experience there is awareness of God's love--God first loved us even in our unworthy state. And because of this we are now able to show the same for others without the expectation of a re-

ward. In so doing one expresses his freedom of the will and experiences its joy.

Finally through the experience of conversion one entered into a new relationship with God through Jesus Christ. He participated in the New Being and became new.

The purpose of this study was first to attempt to isolate essential elements which cause conversion to take place. It was disclosed that the concept of sin was one of the most essential elements. According to Schleiermacher, through the preaching of the Word, the self revelation of Jesus Christ was revealed to man. It was then man's responsibility and freedom to apprehend it. In so doing an individual was convicted of his sins and at the same time forgiven. He was assured of his forgiven state by faith. Kierkegaard similarly was aware of sin as a necessary element in the experience of conversion. In the concept of dread, he says that dread is the fear of human possibilities. Possibilities may be understood as one's potential but they could also refer to the possibility of sin. In the latter sense dread was the fear of committing sins. For Kierkegaard, one of the gravest of sins was the failure to choose one's Self. When a person is confronted by his possibilities and he has the courage to choose his Self, then, his choice is a leap of faith. In choosing his Self he not only strives toward his highest potentials

but also rejects the possibility of sin for that moment. Thus, dread as the possibility of sin served to encourage an individual to take the leap of faith and be converted.

The concept of sin in its practical application to the Nisei was conceived in terms of evil deeds. The failure of the Nisei to strive for self-fulfillment and to attain his highest potential was also interpreted as sin. In addition the possibility of a new life in Christ was also to be interpreted for him. For example, as opposed to the Buddhist concept of suffering, the Christian faith offered the freedom of working for a richer and better life in this world.

The second purpose of this paper was to clear away the stereo-typed ideas about conversion. Conversion is not a once-for-all experience as is commonly held. Rather it is a continual process of change. No one ever fully achieves perfection.

Another common conception is that conversion is necessarily a peculiarly emotional experience. This is not the case. All experiences include emotional elements, but such elements cannot be considered the norm for defining an authentic conversion. Some conversion experiences can occur with little or no excitement. These experiences are the results of a gradual and rational working out of one's problems. The point this author wishes to make is that the

emotional element in conversion is not the important factor and should not be overly stressed. Because the Nisei are asking real theological and psychological questions, a more rational approach will probably be more effective in helping them find answers. If this is the case, conversion for the Nisei will more likely result as they are helped to work out their problems. This does not mean that there may not be emotional elements in their conversion experiences.

The third position often debated is the idea that everyone needs to have a sudden conversion. Bushnell asserted that it was not necessary for everyone. He believed that a child can be nurtured in such a way that he feels he has always been in relationship with God and that this relationship is continually maturing. This process was the mode to the Christian faith for Bushnell. Christian nurture, for this writer, is a process of gradual conversion. Because one's relationship with God is never fully attained and the fact that one's faith is always in the process of maturing one is always in the process of gradual conversion. In this sense one is in need of continual conversion. Thus, gradual conversion rather than sudden conversion is necessary for everyone. Only in the minority of cases is sudden conversion likely to take place. It was suggested that sudden conversion is most likely to take place only when there was great internal conflict.

The greater the conflict and the more one resists conversion the more likely it will be a highly emotional and sudden experience. Thus, in the final analysis this writer rejects the view that sudden conversion is necessary for everyone.

The final purpose is to determine how one can minister effectively to the Nisei. From the study of Schleiermacher and Kierkegaard it is possible to assume that all men have a sense of sin or an awareness of their evil deeds. By proclaiming Jesus Christ the Nisei will have a model against which they can re-evaluate their lives. In so doing one comes to the realization of his short-comings and is convicted of his sin. However, as a minister, the purpose in proclaiming Jesus is not only to convict one of his sins but also to offer the message of grace and salvation. It is to affirm that through faith in Jesus Christ one is saved. By being sensitive to the needs of the Nisei, a minister can lead them to a new mode of life, a life full of meaning and purpose. This then requires the willingness to accept Jesus Christ as one's Savior and that one posit something of the character of Christ in his daily existence. This process is conversion. When conversion takes place, it is necessary continually to support and sustain the individual in his faith. This is done through the process of continually proclaiming the gospel in a meaningful way

and by personal witness. If the Nisei fails to commit his life to Christ, it is important to leave the door open for future encounters and dialogue. This can be done by accepting him as a person and by continuing to show concern for him.

Though this has been an attempt at developing a practical approach to ministering to the Nisei in Hawaii, the material presented has been theoretical. Its validity will be determined when these theories are applied. This outline must be thought of as a possible guide line with the real substance of the procedure growing out of each encounter.

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